

**A thought for today**

TMC and BJP are creating polarisation

PRAKASH KARAT

## Bengal Tinderbox

Mamata must ensure police have a free hand to maintain law and order

**C**ommunal riots and prevailing tension in North 24 Parganas district over a Facebook post once again highlight the precarious law and order situation in Bengal. Violence erupted last weekend after a schoolboy posted material deemed to be defamatory to the Muslim community. Although police apprehended the youngster, tensions in Baduria escalated into mob fury. With violence now spreading to adjoining Basirhat there are indications that malcontents with political affiliations are trying to fish in troubled waters.

Against this backdrop, the war of words between Bengal governor Keshari Nath Tripathi and chief minister Mamata Banerjee is unhelpful. True, a situation has been created in Bengal where Trinamool and BJP are locked in an intense political battle and spare no opportunity to score points over each other. From the turmoil in Gorkhaland to local body elections, the fight between these two is being waged on multiple fronts. But that's hardly any excuse for how a mere social media post can spark off riots.

Bengal today looks like a communal tinderbox that only takes the smallest of sparks to ignite. And the state administration has to be held responsible for this. Recall that the Malda riots last year had erupted when a section of a protest rally against controversial remarks made by a Hindu Mahasabha leader in UP turned violent. That incident also exposed the police's ineptness in reading danger signs. In Baduria too reports are emerging that police failed to make a timely intervention to prevent tensions from escalating. All of this suggests a law and order machinery that is constantly looking over its shoulder for political signals.

Those signals are being interpreted to mean that people associated with the ruling party should be handled with kid gloves. With a significant 27% Muslim population in Bengal, Mamata has been keen on projecting her regime as protector of minorities – from announcing allowances for imams to making special arrangements for Muharram processions. A perception has grown that the state government favours one particular community. This is dangerous in a state that already has a history of political violence. Mamata government must ensure that the police have a free hand to maintain law and order instead of seeking conspiracies behind social media posts. After all, freedom of expression is as essential for democracy as rule of law.

## After Karnan Case

While SC raises questions about appointing EC, judicial appointments await reform

**O**n Wednesday a Supreme Court bench asked if it should fix norms for appointing election commissioners, to ensure their independence in conducting free and fair polls. This was even as it acknowledged that all appointments of election commissioners have been outstanding so far and persons so appointed have been fair and neutral. Article 324 of the Constitution is clear that the President will appoint election commissioners subject to provisions enacted by Parliament. Article 324 does not conceive a role for the apex court in this matter.

Achal Kumar Joti took charge as the new chief election commissioner of India yesterday and he has the big responsibility to move at proper pace to ensure that by 2019 all EVMs will have a voter verifiable paper audit trail. Instead of getting involved in EC appointments SC priority should be to attend to how more than one and a half years after striking down the National Judicial Appointments Commission Act while admitting the need to rectify the collegium system to appoint judges, a new mechanism still hasn't been scripted. With the fresh memorandum of procedure (MoP) still to be finalised, filling of judicial vacancies has become an unseemly tussle with the Centre.

The need for better processes to appoint and remove judges has returned to the spotlight after judges struggled to discipline the just retired Justice CS Karnan. Much before this episode, a collegium member, Justice J Chelameswar, had criticised the collegium's functioning and lack of transparency. The Karnan case should really provide a spur for change. SC and government must not delay the finalisation of the MoP any further. India needs a system where only meritorious judicial candidates are appointed and errant judges are punished.

## Take a tip

Why the US is a hand-out country in the real sense of the term

Jug Suraiya



On a recent visit there, I noticed a curious thing about America. Despite Donald Trump cutting back on a whole lot of social subsidies – or perhaps because of it – the US is truly a hand-out country. Almost everyone you come across as a visitor – waiters in restaurants and bars, tour guides, taxi drivers, hotel bellboys – put out their hands to you.

At first I used to think that all these people were really friendly folk – which the Americans by and large are, notwithstanding the so-called 'Trump effect' – who wanted me to shake hands with them, which I was glad to do. But when I stuck my own hand out to shake theirs, they looked puzzled, and if not exactly put off, not too put on either.

Then it was explained to me by a local that what all these hand-out holding people wanted was not a handshake but a tip.

America literally works on tips. If you ride in a taxi, for instance, you are expected not only to pay the fare for your journey but also give a couple of bucks extra by way of a tip to the driver.

The same goes if you take a guided tour of a tourist attraction. You pay not only for the tour, but at the end of it you pay extra by way of a tip for the guide.

I found this more than a little perplexing. A taxi driver's job was to drive a taxi, for which he received a fair remuneration by way of the fare the passenger paid. So how come the tip on top of that?

The same thing for tour guides. Guides presumably got wages from their employers, who in turn took money from you as a customer. So where did the tip come in?

The answer to that is that the US is a capitalist society in which everyone who provides any kind of service is expected to be an independent profit centre, who receives a limited wage and has to make up for it by way of tips.

Come to think of it, a lot of people in India – from cops, to babus, to netas – also live on tips. Except we don't call them tips. We call them chai-pani.

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# Righting The Wrongs Of History

Indian cities must fix agonising mismatch between grandiose memorials and what really happened

Gautam Bhatia



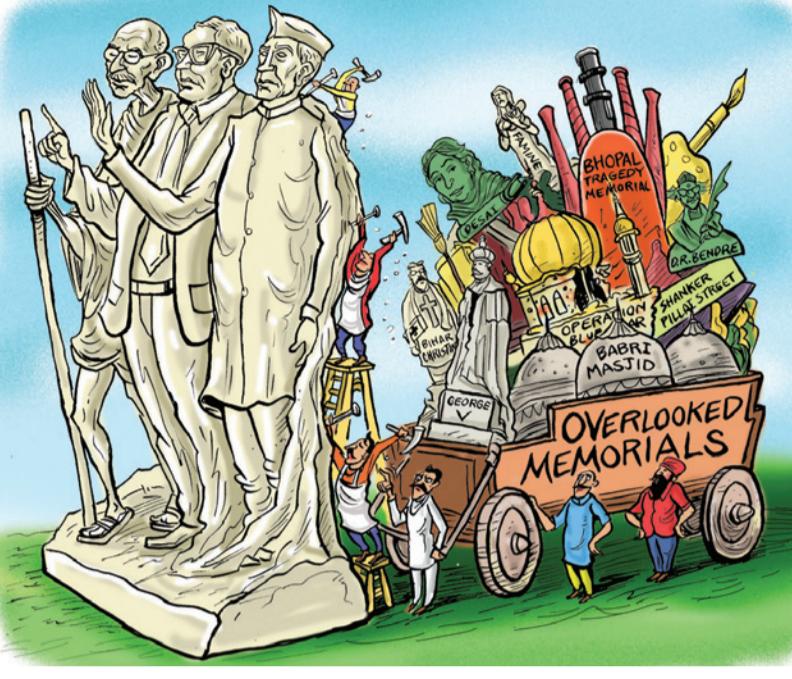
Two of the more critical monuments of recent African American history have been judiciously added to American cities to correct the country's past. The Museum of African American History is a burnished bronze structure with a decidedly African profile, set among the sandstone and travertine neoclassical architecture of Washington DC.

Within its comparatively humble interior is a varied and random set of items strung together to give a disjointed but true picture of Black history: a pair of handcuffs, a slave cabin, metal shackles used in slave ships, a slave auction poster advertising 'a general assortment of Negroes', boxer Muhammad Ali's head gear, writer James Baldwin's passport, even the inauguration day newspaper of America's first black president.

The other, less a national landmark, is a city's tribute to one of its famous sons: a life-size statue of Arthur Ashe, the tennis legend and activist, holding up books and a racket on a city road in Richmond, the capital of Virginia. Both commemorations fall squarely in the awkward setting of white American history – the museum sited amongst monumental buildings that portray America as an imperial power; the lean figure of Ashe, similarly surrounded by bloated emblems of Southern slavery: General Lee and Jefferson Davis.

Any visitor to Richmond or to Washington will clearly sense how the supremely white Anglo Saxon view of history is now being balanced by the inclusion of African American achievement. The only way to deal with the past, say local historians, is by inclusion – not by removing inconvenient monuments, but letting conflicting actions and people live side by side. If the city is a living gallery of history, there is room for every possible addition.

One of the many problems of reading Indian cities stems from the agonising mismatch between what happened in history, what was built, and what remains. Too often, a shameful cover up dismisses the historical as a private



residents: the burnt street in recent riots, the train in which pilgrims were torched, the shattered bullet-ridden walls of the Golden Temple after Operation Bluestar. As in the memorial for the Bhopal Gas Tragedy – real evidence presented without judgment, without the sanitised view of a museum display.

The mismatch of India's real history with its street reality calls for clear action. It should hardly be incumbent upon a Dalit leader to continue proposing more statues of Ambedkar all over India, or a government to only propose memorials to a chauvinistic national history. No country's history is so shamelessly one sided that it revels only in victory.

From public representations it would appear that the Freedom Struggle was the singular event that defines modern India. What then of social and economic struggles? Should a Patna gallery enact the major Bihar famine? Should Bhu-Daan and Narmada Bachao be preserved in some physical form? Rather than mindless statues of a suited Ambedkar, should there be a museum at India Gate dedicated to caste and Dalit oppression? A more inclusive history would move from symbols to defining a picture closer to reality.

The world over, governments are choosing to right the wrongs of history. Canada and Australia have apologised for the mistreatment of their indigenous people; German cities continue to build Holocaust memorials.

If our government's public memorials are to have a semblance of fairness, for a while it will forget the grandiose and the monumental and concentrate on smaller corrections: return King George to the chattri at India Gate, assemble the rubble from the Babri Masjid into a gracious setting of forgiveness in central Ayodhya; act on local efforts: acknowledge the good education work of Christian priests in Bihar; rename streets and squares in Bangalore after Kannada artists, Kerala roads after local writers. To let future residents of these places know that their country's greatness was not just in Freedom Struggles, but in local, sustained and ordinary battles.

The writer is an architect

**Jewish concentration camps, left as they were, remote and silent, are a chilling reminder of Nazi horror. Imagine if artifacts of recent Indian history had been similarly preserved: the burnt street in recent riots, the train in which pilgrims were torched, the shattered bullet-ridden walls of the Golden Temple after Operation Bluestar**

Jewish concentration camps, left as they were, remote and silent, are a chilling reminder of Nazi horror; Nelson Mandela's prison cell on Robben Island says more about his incarceration and resilience than any exhibit.

Had events of recent Indian history been similarly commemorated, the 'real' artifacts would be visible to visitors and

## "Doklam can render overhyped 'Asian century' stillborn ... how Beijing responds will shape its texture"

With the standoff in the Doklam region continuing between India and China, strategic affairs analyst Commodore (retd) C Uday Bhaskar, director of Society for Policy Studies, spoke to Anam Ajmal about the issues at stake in the current hostility and ways to diffuse tensions:

■ How is the current standoff in the Doklam region any different from previous standoffs between India and China?

Doklam is very different from previous standoffs between India and China. In this case it is an intrusion into Bhutanese territory by the PLA and this lies at the tri-junction of Bhutan, China and India (Sikkim) adjacent to the dagger-shaped Chumbi valley. Indian troops in the area urged the Chinese construction team to desist and pull back – but in vain. In the intervening period, the standoff has become more intense.

■ What is at stake for Bhutan?

At stake is Bhutan's status as an independent, sovereign state that is located between the two Asian giants and the sanctity of agreements between nations over matters of competing territorial claims. Furthermore, the confidence and trust that Bhutan has reposed in India to look after its external relations and defence is also on the anvil.

■ What is the reason for India to take such a firm stand in the Sikkim region currently?

Secondly the terrain advantage in the Sikkim/Chumbi sector which currently gives India a tactical edge would be diluted by PLA's advance into the east Sikkim/Doklam area. Such ingress into Doklam would expand China's footprint in the Chumbi valley and bring PLA more proximate to the narrow Siliguri corridor that connects the Indian mainland to the northeast.

And finally, the resolve and perspicacity of the Modi government in dealing with such a challenge from China is now in public domain – and the intertemperate turn of phrase from Beijing has

There are multiple reasons for India adopting this firm but non-provocative stand over Doklam. The first is the responsibility it has assumed in relation to Bhutan's external relations. If China's creeping assertiveness is not resisted by India, the credibility of the Indian government in honouring its agreements to its neighbours would be seriously compromised.

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And finally, the resolve and perspicacity of the Modi government in dealing with such a challenge from China is now in public domain – and the intertemperate turn of phrase from Beijing has

only exacerbated the matter further.

■ The standoff has lasted for very long. How dangerous can it be?

The current situation is grave and should not be allowed to turn dangerous – that is, the current 'jostling' could slide into physical scuffles and injuries; and the worst case exigency is an exchange of ordnance – inadvertent or otherwise.

That would be dangerous.

■ Has the treaty for the maintenance of peace and tranquillity along the line of actual control in the India-China border areas signed on September 7, 1993, outlived its purpose?

No, to the contrary it is most relevant now and its resilience is being tested. Since 1993 the two sides have respected the sanctity of peace and not a shot has been exchanged in anger. Commitment to this spirit of 'shanti' ought to be reiterated and existing dispute resolving arrangements revitalised.

■ What could the measures be to tone down the hostility

### dilbert



Discourse: Swami Sukhabodhananda

To succeed in the game of life, we have to struggle. This struggle is consuming our life silently. But that does not mean we should give up; because, the creative process installed in one's DNA has to be allowed to blossom. Being creative has to be encouraged. But in this process, if you are not alert, your inner joy will be destroyed. So make sure that your commitment for corporate excellence is based on the foundation of work ethics.

Ethics is not rules based on laws. Ethics is based on goodness. Goodness is not bound by definition; it is like intelligence – free flowing, but has its intrinsic wisdom. Ethics is a moment of order and an action born out of order; it is goodness. Goodness in action is ethics. It is a measurement of health to be ethical in an unethical society. An ethical process is order in motion

and hence crucial in the corporate world. An important aspect of being altruistic is a high degree of integrity. From a spiritual dimension, it is integrating the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects. Abusing the body is unethical. It is harming the body. When the body is abused, it affects the mind. When one drinks alcohol, one is damaging not only the body but also the mind, is it not? So something wrong done to the body affects the mind. Once the mind is affected one's perception is also affected. So handling one's body rightly involves right food and right posture.

Right posture means keeping your body alive and vibrant. Good body energy has the power to do right things. Like in sports, a right posture will help you to perform. Next is emotional health. Your love should be to the whole, the

whole team. Such a love is. So love includes the self but does not get imprisoned by the self.

"Who is flying the kite?"

The egoistic person says, "I am flying the kite."

The breeze says, "I am flying the kite."

The tail of the kite says, "I am flying the kite."

The string says, "I am flying the kite."

Existence says, "Child, we are flying the kite."

The value of the team is supremely beneficial, and that is possible if your love is not restricted to the self but to the whole. Such a value spontaneously brings in the power to give, to contribute and to serve. You should not only contribute to each other in a team but also to the customer, not just in manipulative words and smiles, but from the value of truly contributing.

## Excellence At Work Founded On Ethics



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