

A nation is a society united by delusions about its ancestry and by common hatred of its neighbors
—William Ralph Inge

Reducing pollution in Kolkata

National capital Delhi may have earned the dubious reputation of being also the pollution capital of India, but Kolkata is not lagging far behind. According to a survey conducted by the Chittaranjan National Cancer Institute, 18.4 cases of lung cancer per one lakh people were reported from Calcutta. Data collected by the Central Pollution Control Board also confirm that Kolkata is among the worst affected cities along with Delhi as far as air pollution is concerned. Air pollution causes not only cancer but many other lung ailments like chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases (COPD).

Most of the urban air pollution is caused by motor vehicles run on fossil fuels like petrol or diesel. The importance of replacing these vehicles with non-polluting modes of transport, therefore, cannot be over-emphasized. Some major car manufacturers of the country have promised to introduce electrically-driven cars before long. The West Bengal transport minister Shubendu Adhikari's statement in the Bengal Legislative Assembly on Wednesday that the West Bengal Government is soon going to put on road 130 electric buses in Kolkata and Asansol-Durgapur area is, therefore, particularly welcome. The minister has promised to introduce an additional four hundred electric buses by December.

Indeed, it is time for the Government to encourage people, especially daily office-going commuters, to switch over from private cars to public transport. This is expected to bring down the level of air pollution in the city considerably. The old tramcar was the city's only non-polluting mode of transport until a few years ago.

But the tramcars are being edged out by other, quicker modes of transport. To make the trams a viable and reliable mode of transport, the tram lines will have to be re-laid on separate and elevated tracks.

This will require a huge capital investment. But taking into consideration the long-term gain from reduced pollution and improved health, investing on trams will be entirely justifiable.

Simultaneously, harnessing solar energy should get top priority so that thermal power generated by burning coal — another fossil fuel that accounts for the largest percentage of power generation all over the world — can be progressively brought down. For this, unconventional and out-of-the-box thinking will be necessary. Coal burning is responsible for global warming which is already causing irreversible climate changes and raising serious concerns for the future of mankind. The use of coal for power generation should be progressively de-emphasized.

Sohrabuddin encounter case

REFLEX ACTION

Amritananda Chakravorty and Mihir Samson

In one of the shocking exposes of the recent times, The Caravan magazine published a series of stories last week on the mysterious death of CBI special judge B.H. Loya in December 2014, who was hearing the trial of the alleged encounter killing of Sohrabuddin Sheikh in 2005, wherein Amit Shah was the prime accused. The media reported that the judge had died of a heart attack, while the family refused to talk at that time fearing for their lives.

The reports highlighted the inconsistencies in the reported account of the death; about the procedures followed after his death; and about the condition of the judge's body when it was handed over to the family. Though the family asked for an inquiry commission to probe Loya's death, none was ever set up. Within 29 days of his death, the judge who replaced Loya discharged Amit Shah on the basis of lack of evidence. The CBI did not appeal against Shah's discharge, or the discharge of a number of the other accused in the case, despite the fact that it had probed the Sohrabuddin's fake encounter at the directions of the Supreme Court.

The timing of Loya's death and the subsequent events make it clear that this was not a simple case of heart attack. Loya took over the trial in June 2014 after his predecessor judge, J.T. Utpat, was suddenly moved out from the trial. On June 6, 2014, Utpat had reprimanded Amit Shah for repeatedly failing to appear before the court and ordered him to present himself on June 26 but one day before that, on June 25, 2014, Utpat was transferred to the Pune sessions court. This was contrary to the Supreme Court's order stating that the trial should be heard by one judge throughout.

The Caravan also reported that Loya's family had claimed that before his death, Judge Loya was offered bribe of Rs 100 cr by the then chief justice of the Bombay High Court, Justice Mohit Shah to give a verdict in favour of Mr. Amit Shah. All these allegations as well as the mysterious death of Judge Loya and the subsequent discharge of Amit Shah bring to the fore the collusion between the judiciary and the executive in one of the most shocking cases in the history of independent India. The alleged killing of a judge showed how high the stakes

were in that trial and the extent to which the political masters can go to remove the 'impediments'.

The Caravan reports have been met with stunned silence in the mainstream media and judiciary. Finally, former judges have started to speak out. Former Chief Justice of Delhi High Court A.P. Shah expressed his concern over the death of Judge Loya and demanded that the Bombay High Court must look into the material available and set up an inquiry into the matter. He claimed that if the same was not done and the matter was not clarified, aspersions could be cast on the image of the judiciary. Justice Shah also prompted Justice Mohit Shah to come forward and clear his name, who has since then retired. Another retired Justice of Bombay High Court, B.H. Marlapalle, has also sought the establishment of a 'Special Investigation Team' by the Bombay High Court and a proper investigation into the matter, which would help subordinate judges feel that "they are not orphans". Even the Latur Bar Association passed a resolution demanding an independent investigation into Judge Loya's death.

Political parties like CPM and AAP have raised grave doubts about the circumstances of Judge Loya's death, and the need for an independent probe. However, the complete silence of the highest judiciary into these horrific allegations remains a cause of concern for many.

Major legal decisions
i. Hadiya's father petition for in-camera proceedings denied - Hadiya's father moved an

application earlier this week seeking in-camera proceedings before the Supreme Court. The Court will be interacting with Hadiya in open court on November 27. The Court refused the permission for the same stating that there was no reason for conducting in-camera proceedings. Hadiya's father had cited security concerns as the reason for his request, but the same was denied by the court. The petition would be heard again on Monday. [Shafiq Jahan v Asokan, Special Leave Petition (Criminal) 5777/2017, next listed 27.11.2017]

ii. JAL directed not to sell property - The Supreme Court issued an injunction restraining the 13 directors of Jaiprakash Associates Ltd. (JAL), the parent company of the debt-ridden Jaypee Infratech Ltd (JIL), from transferring, alienating or otherwise dealing with, or disposing of, any property and assets belonging to them and their family members. In addition, the court directed the company to deposit Rs. 275 crores with its registry on November 22, Rs. 150 crores by December 13 and Rs. 125 crores by December 31. The court also appointed Advocate Pawan Shree Agrawal as amicus curiae in the matter; to set up within one week an online platform for the flat buyers to register their grievances. If any transfers are made in violation of the order, the directors will be liable for criminal prosecution as well as contempt of court. [Chitra Sharma v Union of India, Writ Petition No. 744/2017, date of order: 22.11.2017]

iii. Karti Chidambaram allowed to travel abroad by the Court. The Supreme Court granted permission to Karti Chidambaram to travel to the United Kingdom for 10 days from 1st December to 10th December for the admission of his daughter in Cambridge University, United Kingdom. He was asked to file an affidavit, with an undertaking that he would be back in India on 10th December. The Court further clarified that this was a temporary order passed without getting into the merits of the case, including the legality of the look-out circular, and can't be cited in any court of law that would have the effect of hindering investigations in any manner. [Central Bureau of Investigation v Karti P. Chidambaram, Special Leave to Appeal (C) No(s).20699-20700/2017, date of order: 20.11.2017] (IPA/To be continued)



Pope Francis is welcomed after arriving at the airport in Dhaka, Bangladesh—REUTERS

Challenges before Rahul Gandhi

FOCUS

Kalyani Shankar

Congress Vice-President Rahul Gandhi is likely to take over the reins of his party ending the suspense on December 5. He will be fifth member of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty to become the president of the 132-year grand old party. The Congress strategists are delighted that in the run up to the elections in Gujarat next month, Rahul Gandhi is getting good response.

Rahul seems to have engineered a remarkable makeover by shedding his reticence and adding a chatty approach to his public image. He has been doing much better campaign and his delivery of speech, the issues he has taken up to attack the BJP clearly indicates a carefully crafted strategy of the party managers. His September US trip showed that he had some careful coaching. After dilly-dallying for 14 years, Rahul himself declared from the US that he was ready to become the Congress party's prime ministerial candidate.

Rahul has reasons to smile as he is being taken seriously. His newfound humour in his tweets and responses are catching up in the social media perhaps because he is able to catch the imagination of the people. Moreover he is no longer just a shrill critic of Modi but raises much calmer issues of importance — both political as well as economic. The GST and demonetisation —

the two economic issues he has taken up are important as they represent the discontent among the traders, middle class and others. People who were dismissing him as "Pappu" have sat up to look at him afresh. The bigger change is that the BJP has been responding to the issues he has raised instead of ridiculing him.

Not only senior cabinet ministers but also Modi and Amit Shah have reacted to Rahul Gandhi's charges on economy and other issues. A senior congress leader says, "I don't know what is happening. Earlier we used to request most newspapers and channels to give us some space and they never did. Today, on their own, the media coverage on Rahul and the Congress has increased considerably." The strategists believe that he is on the way to becoming a 24/7 politician. "Once he takes over as the party chief, he might even become more accessible if he wants to make a mark", claims a Congress working committee member.

All this improvement will disappear if Rahul as Congress President does not deliver. It is too early to say whether Rahul's presidency will make a positive difference to the Congress Party because the task ahead is stupendous.

Though in the short run nothing much might change, in the long run, Rahul needs to think of a strategy if he is serious about emerging an alternate to Modi. Clearly, Modi-bashing alone is not enough. There are no short cuts except to build an alter native development agenda and a new narrative. The Pachmarhi conclave and Shimla conclave brainstorming sessions had yielded new ideas in the past. In 2004, the Congress came up with the concept of "Aam Aadmi" which clicked. He needs to have some out-of-the-box thinking to woo the voters.

Secondly, it is vital to build the organisation, which is in shambles. Unfortunately both the mother and son had taken little initiative in the organization all these years. Unless this is done, the Congress has no hope to rule again. The BJP has a strong leader, organisational strength, the support of the Sangh Parivar and unlimited finance.

Thirdly, the party needs

second rung leaders. The Congress had in the past strong state leaders like B.C. Roy, Sanjiva Reddy, Morarji Desai and Y.B. Chavan and also national leaders like Nehru, Rajendra Prasad, and Sardar Patel. An insecure Gandhi had put puppets in the state, which continues still.

Fourthly, a good team with a blend of old guards and the younger leaders is required. The old guard will provide the experience while the younger ones will induct fresh blood. Pedigreed leaders like Jyotiraditya Scindia, Sachin Pilot and Deepender Huda are in his inner circle. Though it cannot be a disqualification he has to ensure others also get importance.

Fifthly, the party has to find ways of connecting with the people. Only this will retain old voters and get new voters. Chanting Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi will not help any more as many youth voters have no clue about who they are. They have aspirations, which need to be fulfilled.

The sixth is to build a good caste coalition. In the past the congress had a winning caste combination of Brahmins, Dalits, Muslims and Backward classes. But they had all moved away due to the emergence of caste and

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identity based parties. Rahul has to find ways of getting them back by way of social engineering.

The seventh is to build credible alliances. Sonia Gandhi was able to build the UPA in 2004 but it is shrinking. Since it may take a while for the Congress to come to power on its own, the alliance is the next best way to fight the BJP. After all Modi had come to power with just 31 per cent of votes and the rest all are scattered. The efforts should be to ensure that the opposition votes are not split.

It still remains to be seen whether the Gandhi scion can emerge as a formidable opponent to Prime Minister Modi. He has to show his determination, dedication and political astuteness to match Modi's leadership. One visible thing is for the first time the Gandhi scion is enjoying his role as opposition leader. (IPA)

Conventional Crossword

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	32	33	34	35

ACROSS

- Gem
- Punctuation mark
- Attack
- Dutch cheese
- Therefore
- Deep mud
- Plant juice
- Stop
- Go
- Land measure
- Quantity of paper
- Peruvian capital
- Level
- Out of sorts
- Break suddenly

DOWN

- Augusty
- First man
- Metal-bearing rock
- Electric insulator
- Highly skilled
- Residents
- Lift with effort
- Marine carnivore
- Visages
- Riverside
- embankment
- River willy
- Bearing
- Twist out of shape
- Finist

SU D O K U : 2041

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

Yesterday's Solution 2039

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

Yesterday's Cross Word Solution 049

M	E	N	D	S	B	E	L	T
A	X	E	F	A	R	R		
S	P	A	C	E	T	R	U	E
T	I	R	A	D	E	S	A	
R	P	U	N	M	E	T		
L	E	O	C	A	T	R		
I	R	E	C	I	T	A	L	
T	R	E	E	T	A	S	E	
H	V	A	N	P	E	N		
E	W	E	R	N	E	E	D	S

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