

The difference between a moral man and a man of honor is that the latter respects a discreditable act, even when it has worked and he has not been caught.

— H. V. Mencken

Calling the Chinese bluff

China has decidedly lost the first round of its psychological war against India on the Doklam issue. On Wednesday, the Chinese Foreign Ministry issued a fifteen page statement claiming that India had, on its own, withdrawn most of the 400 of its troops that had 'trespassed into Chinese territory' and by July end, there were only 40 Indian soldiers there. The impression that the statement wanted to convey was that faced with Beijing's uncompromising attitude on withdrawal of Indian troops, New Delhi was buckling. New Delhi lost no time in calling the Chinese bluff. The Ministry of External Affairs promptly rebutted the Chinese claim by stating categorically that "There has been no troop reduction by India on the ground." The firm message was that India was in no mood to yield to Chinese pressure tactics. After this, Beijing will find it hard to save its precious face.

What the Chinese miscalculated this time is the Indian response. After hinting that unless India withdrew its troops from the 'Chinese territory' (which was in reality Bhutanese territory) at Doklam, it would face serious consequences, the Chinese expected India to back down, withdraw its troops and engage in diplomatic negotiations. Negotiations would drag on but meanwhile the Chinese troops will entrench themselves firmly in Doklam and whatever the outcome of the negotiations, the physical occupation of Doklam by the Chinese would be a fait accompli. The unexpected Indian response upset their plan. Meanwhile they could also gauge the feelings of the two Big Powers, the US and Russia.

Whether the Doklam adventure had to do with China's internal politics, like the possibility of Xi Jinping seeking a second term for himself at the coming CPC party Congress or turning people's attention from the effect of the slowing down of the economy, are matters of speculation. But what is obvious is that China's threats and pressures failed to make India resile from its firm stand. It was India's message not only to China but also to her smaller Asian neighbours that it is possible to take a strong stand against Beijing's hegemonism. China's claim that India has reduced its military presence in Doklam may be to explain away China's own gradual vacation of Bhutanese territory it had encroached upon. In the process China has also learnt that constantly reminding India of what happened in 1962 will pay diminishing returns.

Happenings in election-bound Gujarat

REFLEX ACTION

L.S. Herdiana

Unless handled tactfully, the agitation launched by Narmada Bacho Andolan is threatening to take a violent turn. Hundreds of Andolan followers have begun an indefinite fast to protest against the forcible removal of 18,000 families from the area likely to be submerged in the Narmada water. These families are being removed without making satisfactory arrangement for their rehabilitation.

Announcing the decision to resort to mass fast, NBA leader Medha Patkar told the media the government had turned a deaf ear to the plight of those living there for years. She said the police conducted a mock drill to intimidate villagers in Barwani and threatened them to vacate their houses by July 31. The government is trying to make around 18,386 families living in 141 villages homeless, she said.

Accusing the government of maintaining false records of the families to be displaced, she said the government gimmicks would bear no fruit if they neglected public's grief. The NBA activist said that the government had failed to take care of those displaced earlier and was now threatening to evacuate 141 villages. Patkar alleged that the government did not have credible data on the people likely to be affected by displacement as it was busy serving corporate houses.

She alleged that the chief minister never held talks with real activists but depended on his close associates for information about the developments. She said the Gujarat government had ensured enough water supplies for corporate giants and big cities, but neglected the plight of drought-affected villages which were in need of water. She further pointed out that the 192 villages surveyed in the 60s were now facing threat of flood because of the casual attitude of the government.

Before forcibly removing people from the submersible area, the administration removed the ashes of Mahatma Gandhi, which were kept in a memorial on the bank of Narmada. But the administration faced stiff opposition from the NBA activists and also the local people.

The ashes of Gandhi, his wife Kasturba and private

secretary Mahadev Bhai Desai have been shifted 4km to Kukra rehabilitation centre, where a temporary memorial has been created, collector Tejaswi Naik told the media. "A committee was formed to shift religious sites and memorials out of the submergence area. An exquisite memorial will be created once submergence is complete and new ghats are formed above the new water mark," he said.

Officials reached Rajghat at 4am and used earth moving machines to dig up the memorial, which was built in 1965. Around 7am, NBA activists led by Medha Patkar arrived and started raising slogans against the administration. They lay down on the road to block vehicles carrying the ashes. The issue of submergence was also raised in the Vidhan Sabha, with the Congress members registering loud protest against the attitude of the government. They first demanded a discussion on Sardar Sarovar ousteees. When Speaker Sitasaran Sharma adjourned the House sine die, the Congress MLAs staged a sit-in outside the House as a mark of protest.

The Congress members later held a foot march led by Ajay Singh, Jitu Patwari, Govind Singh, Bala Bachchan, Sanjay Yadav, Sunderlal Tiwar from the assembly to the chief minister's official residence, but were intercepted by the police near Patrakar Bhawan where they started a sit-in against the state government. A handful of MLAs spearheaded by Jitu Patwari dodged the police and reached Raj Bhawan planning a move towards the CM's official residence. But, they were arrested.

The police also arrested Congress MLAs led by Ajay Singh and sent them to jail. The MLAs were released later in the evening. "When MLAs cannot meet the chief minis-

ter how can public do so; Congress will organise protests throughout the state," Ajay Singh told reporters before courting arrest.

Cabinet minister Umashankar Gupta said the Congress move to disrupt proceedings of the house was pre-planned. In order to express their solidarity with the agitating people some Congress leaders visited the place where Patkar and others are observing the indefinite fast.

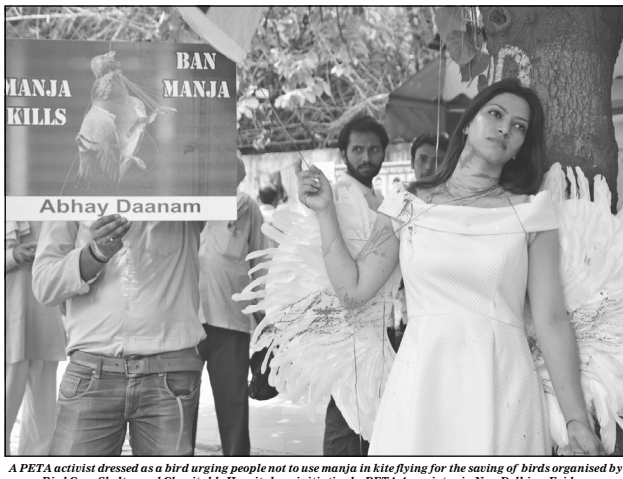
A delegation of Congress leaders, including leader of Opposition Ajay Singh, state president Arun Yadav and several MLAs, participated in the protest. Arun Yadav termed the whole development as very unfortunate.

Ajay Singh came down heavily on the way the district administration bulldozed Rajghat and termed the incident as national shame. "What else could be expected from the people who worship Godse, the killer of Gandhi, he said. Singh said that more than three lakh people will be displaced to please one person (Modi).

It is learnt that the central government is keeping a close watch on the development over the issue of submergence. As the issue is linked to Supreme Court and Gujarat, the state government has been asked to keep the PMO posted. With assembly elections in Gujarat round the corner, BJP chief Amit Shah is also keeping a keen watch on the developments.

The government is worried that after the farmers' agitation, it may have to face another law and order issue if the ousteees' protest turns violent. Dhar is among the four districts affected by the rise in the water level of the SSP reservoir due to closure of gates and most of the villages in submergence zone are dominated by Patidars. The Patidars had emerged as the most aggressive face of the recent farmers' agitation and the SSP imbroglio may again bring them face to face with the government. CM Shivraj Singh is in constant touch with the people's representatives of the area. Besides BJP, the RSS network has also been activated to ensure that people remain calm.

The state government has assured the Centre that it will not allow the issue to snowball into a major controversy. (IPA)



A PETA activist dressed as a bird urging people not to use manja in kite flying for the saving of birds organised by Bird Care Shelter and Charitable Hospital, an initiative by PETA Associates, in New Delhi on Friday.

Tory stance and education

FOCUS

Ken Livingstone

Despite a media frenzy of misrepresentation fuelled by the Tories, polling this week confirmed that only 17 per cent of 18 to 24-year-olds interpreted Jeremy Corbyn's comments to "deal with" historic student debt as promising a full write-off.

Do the tabloid journalists and Tory MPs who over the last few weeks have been again and again stoking an argument about student debt — and are desperately, even now, trying to keep the row going — care in the slightest about student debt and spiralling tuition fees?

The answer of course is no. Their hypocrisy knows no bounds, especially as Corbyn is the only leader of the major parties who stands unequivocally for free education, and despite recent media rumours of divisions on the issue, the Tories have made no commitment to even keep tuition fee rises and student debt levels under control.

We should be clear that in stark contrast to Theresa May's Tories, Jeremy can be 100 per cent trusted on this issue and has an outstanding record.

Myself, Tony Benn and Jeremy were among those MPs who rebelled against Tony Blair's decision to introduce tuition fees in 1998.

I remember speaking alongside student campaigners for free education who rightly warned that the New Labour government's threats and pressures was the thin end of the wedge when it came to passing the costs of education on to students themselves.

There was something particularly angering about seeing MPs who had themselves benefited from a free university education voting to take away the ladder of opportunity for future generations, and many of those who have attacked Jeremy in recent weeks in the political elite fall into the same category.

Last year's further rise in tuition fees from the Tories showed how the principled position of arguing for investment in free education has been proven correct time and again, and these rises came at time when England has become one of the most expensive places to study in the world — students are graduating with an average debt of over £50,000.

Indeed, Andrew Adonis (who was director of the No 10 policy unit under Blair) recently analysed how the situation has got so far out of con-

trol, writing: "How did we get from the idea of a reasonable contribution to the cost of university tuition — the principle of the Blair reform of 2004, for which I was largely responsible — to today's Frankenstein's monster of £50,000-plus debts for graduates on modest salaries who can't remotely afford to pay back these sums while starting families?"

While there has been much discussion, and rightly so, about the effect of crippling levels of student debt on individuals, too often missing from the debate over tuition fees over the last 19 years has been a discussion on the central role higher education could play in promoting long-term prosperity for the British economy and growth in the future.

As the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development put it in 2010: "Even after taking account of the cost to the public Exchequer of financing degree

courses, higher tax revenues and social contributions from people with university degrees make tertiary education a good long-term investment."

Indeed, free education would pay for itself. The government's own figures show that for every £1 invested in higher education, the economy expands by £2.60.

The rewards of investing in free higher education couldn't be higher — both in that we need to invest in education to give young people the chance to fulfil their potential and in that we need to invest in education to ensure Britain has a highly skilled, high-growth economy in the long term.

This would especially be the case if such investment was alongside investment in technology and infrastructure.

As the Nobel prize-winning economist and former head of the World Bank Professor Joseph Stiglitz has pointed out, "investments in technology, education and infrastructure ... will stimulate the economy and create jobs in the short run and promote growth and debt reduction in the long run."

Indeed, Germany has scrapped tuition fees in recent

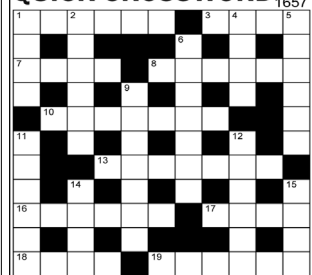
years — proving that free education is possible.

And of course, if the government genuinely clamped down on tax avoidance, or made the 1 per cent pay their fair share, billions of pounds would be made available to fund free education and other vital public services such as the National Health Service (NHS).

The scale of the Tories' tax giveaways for the years ahead is massive. According to Treasury and Office for Budget Responsibility figures, they will cost the Exchequer £65 billion over the four years from 2018-19 to 2021-22. Jeremy Corbyn and Labour are quite right to insist these resources should instead be used to invest in Britain's future.

We mustn't let the Tories and their media mogul mates distract us from the key issues in the months ahead as they throw every smear and misrepresentation in our direction in a bid to keep Labour out of power, including in this area. Let's be 100 per cent clear: only Labour and Jeremy Corbyn in government will invest in our future — including investing in free education to benefit our economy and society. (IPA/ The author is a senior Labour Party leader in Britain)

QUICK CROSSWORD



- Across**
1. Reach a peak (6)
 3. Legend (4)
 7. Brood (4)
 8. French brandy (6)
 10. Charged exorbitantly (7)
 13. Arrogantly superior (7)
 16. University grounds (6)
 17. Break (4)
 18. Nil (4)
 19. Filter (6)
- Down**
1. Temporary settlement (4)
 2. Run through with spear (6)
 4. Pull sharply (4)
 5. Barrack (6)
 6. Pastille (7)
 9. Lockjaw (7)
 11. Bird of prey (6)
 12. Posture (6)
 14. Portent (4)
 15. Bridge (4)

Previous solution
Across: 1. Despaired, 6. Magma, 7. Event, 9. Sore, 10. Hostel, 12. Invite, 14. Mini, 17. Niche, 18. Owing, 19. Brokerage.
Down: 2. Eager, 3. Plan, 4. Icebox, 5. Elect, 6. Mission, 8. Telling, 11. Sreak, 13. Vicar, 15. Long, 16. Sour.

SUDOKU: 1938

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

Yesterday's Solution 1937

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

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