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Putting so many lives at risk

If the authorities care for Delhi's future, they must heed the SC

The Supreme Court on Monday could not help but express its anguish over what it called "a complete breakdown" of law and order in Delhi because of frequent traders' strikes against the ongoing sealing drive in some of the city's popular markets. The situation has become a "free for all" and the "rule of law was meaningless if you [the government] was condoning illegality", the apex court observed on Tuesday. The frustration of the judges with Delhi's civic authorities is justified. It has been over a decade since the apex court started efforts to rid Delhi of the unchecked bending of rules and illegal, unsafe buildings. The first such drive against shops and businesses operating from illegal premises was ordered by the court in 2006. The current action against a fresh crop of illegal shops and offices followed the court's decision last December to revive its monitoring committee that had sealed thousands of illegal commercial establishments a decade ago. In 2006, the authorities sidestepped the drive by bringing in legislation. This time, it is trying to stall it by tweaking the Master Plan 2021.

The route to arbitrarily regularise may bring relief to traders who will get to run their businesses out of poorly provisioned buildings and markets. It may protect a powerful vote bank. But it has pushed the city into a terrible civic mess. The SC bench says the government is putting at risk the lives of 186 lakh people to protect 15 lakh traders. Today, safety is the biggest concern in most commercial areas of Delhi. Describing the Khan Market restaurants as "a disaster waiting to happen", the Delhi High Court in 2016 had blamed "the public-private partnership of municipal and police authorities, flat and restaurant owners". Delhi is lucky it hasn't been hit by a tragedy like the Kamala Mills fire in Mumbai.

If Delhi's authorities really care for the future of the city, they should rise above petty motivations, listen to the Supreme Court, and do their jobs. Strengthening the enforcement mechanism needed to keep a check on illegal constructions and stopping the misuse of municipal laws will be a good place to start.

All-out trade wars are never good for the world

The US is threatening China and others with restrictive measures such as tariffs

Recent actions by the Donald Trump administration have increased fears of an all-out trade war. The United States is threatening China and other countries with tariffs and other restrictive measures. China has retaliated with tariffs on US farm imports. Other countries are contemplating similar actions. And all this is happening at a time when the multilateral trade regime is caught in a deep crisis. The last two ministerial conferences of the World Trade Organization have failed to arrive at any understanding. This means that the scope of any collective action preventing escalation by other countries is bleak.

The US' trade policies are driven by Mr Trump's promise of reviving manufacturing activity and employment in the country. The problem with such an approach is that it is blinkered. When Mr Trump and his advisers complain about the decline of manufacturing activity in their domestic economy, they chose to ignore the fact that the US continues to remain the leading economy in the world. Despite running large trade deficits, the US does not face a balance of payments problem. This is because its economic supremacy forces other countries to maintain dollar reserves. It is easier to encourage domestic steel production by raising tariffs. Dealing with the repercussions of China scaling back on dollar reserves and the potential consequences of this move for global economic stability will be far more difficult.

All this is not to say that nothing is wrong with the present economic order. Blue collar workers in developed countries have witnessed a squeeze in their living standards. Countries such as India are struggling to replicate the manufacturing success story scripted by others. The credibility of policymakers to provide relief is being eroded. This calls for a reinvention of existing economic thinking. History shows that succumbing to the temptation of trade wars led to great depression rather than prosperity.

Is it time to #DeleteWhatsApp?

We should hold all social media companies accountable for the massive breaches of privacy



VIVEK WADHWA

WhatsApp differentiates itself from Facebook by touting its end-to-end encryption. "Some of your most personal moments are shared with WhatsApp", it says, so "your messages, photos, videos, voice messages, documents, and calls are secured from falling into the wrong hands". A WhatsApp founder recently expressed outrage at Facebook's privacy policies by tweeting "It is time. #deletefacebook". But WhatsApp may need to look in the mirror. Its members may not be aware that when using WhatsApp's "group chat" feature, they are susceptible to the same type of data harvesting and profiling that Cambridge Analytica employed on Facebook. WhatsApp makes available mobile phone numbers, which can be used to accurately identify and locate group members.

WhatsApp groups are designed to enable discussions between family and friends. Businesses also use them to provide information and support. The originators of groups can add contacts from their phones or create links enabling anyone to opt in. These

groups, which can be found through web searches, discuss topics as diverse as agriculture, politics and pornography.

Researchers in Europe demonstrated that any tech-savvy person can obtain treasure troves of data from WhatsApp groups by using nothing more than an old Samsung smartphone running scripts.

Kiran Garimella, of École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, in Switzerland sent me a draft of a paper he co-authored with Gareth Tyson, of Queen Mary University, UK, titled "WhatsApp, doc? A first look at WhatsApp public group data". It details how they were able to obtain data from nearly half a million messages exchanged between 45,754 WhatsApp users in 178 public groups over a six-month period, including their mobile numbers and the images, videos, and web links that they had shared.

The researchers obtained lists of public WhatsApp groups through web searches and used a browser automation tool to join a few of the roughly 2,000 groups they found. Their smartphones began to receive large streams of messages, which WhatsApp stored in a local database. The data is encrypted, but the cipher key is stored inside the RAM of the mobile device itself. This allowed the researchers to decrypt the data using a technique developed by Indian researchers, LP Gudipaty and KY Jhala. It was no harder than using a key hidden atop a door to enter a home.

The researchers' goal was to determine



A WhatsApp founder was recently outraged at Facebook's privacy policies SHUTTERSTOCK

how WhatsApp could be used for social science research. They plan to make their dataset and tools publicly available after they anonymise the data. Their intentions are good, but their paper has exposed the flaws of the application, and how easily marketers, hackers, and governments can take advantage of the WhatsApp platform.

Indeed, The New York Times recently published a story on the Chinese government's detention of human rights activist, Zhang Guanghong, after monitoring WhatsApp group of Guanghong's friends, with whom he had shared an article that criticised the government. The Times speculated that the government had hacked his phone; but gathering such information is easy for any-

one with a group hyperlink.

This is not the only fly in the WhatsApp ointment that this year has revealed. *Wired* reported that researchers in Germany, found a series of flaws in encrypted messaging applications that enable anyone who controls a WhatsApp server to "effortlessly insert new people into an otherwise private group, even without the permission of the administrator who ostensibly controls access to that conversation". Gaining access to a computer server requires sophisticated hacking skills or the type of access that only governments can gain. But as *Wired* wrote, "the premise of so-called end-to-end encryption has always been that even a compromised server shouldn't expose secrets".

WhatsApp also announced in 2016 that it would be sharing user data, including phone numbers, with Facebook. In an exchange of emails, the company told me that it does not track location within a country and does not share contacts or messages, which are encrypted, with Facebook. But it did confirm that it is sharing users' phone numbers, device identifiers, operating system information, control choices, and usage information with the "Facebook family of companies". That leaves open the question as to whether Facebook could then track those users in greater detail even if WhatsApp doesn't.

Facebook and its "family of companies" are being much too casual about privacy. It is time to hold them all accountable for their massive breaches of our privacy.

This is the first in a series of articles on data privacy. Vivek Wadhwa is a Distinguished Fellow at Carnegie Mellon University at Silicon Valley and author of The Driver in the Driverless Car: How Our Technology Choices Will Create the Future. The views expressed are personal.

HEALING TOUCH



A patient in Gauhati on World Tuberculosis Day. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched a campaign to fast-track India's response to the world's leading infectious killer AP

Every tuberculosis case treated can save others

Initiatives in Indian cities show it's possible to engage the private sector to bolster the national TB programme



MANORAMA BAKSHI
BJORN LOMBERG

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set the impressive goal of eradicating tuberculosis (TB) in India by 2025. TB claims the lives of more than four lakh Indians every year.

The PM has made it clear that now is not the time for the status quo to prevail. New economic evidence commissioned by India-Consensus, a collaboration between Tata Trusts and the Copenhagen Consensus, shows that Prime Minister Modi is entirely right to focus on tuberculosis. In Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan, Tata Trusts and the Copenhagen Consensus have worked with hundreds of stakeholders to identify the best policies in more than 40 areas. Top economists are generating tailor-made data on costs, benefits and impacts.

Nimalan Arinaminpathy from Imperial College, London, has analysed TB in Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan. TB management is important because each case treated saves others. The analysis indicates that increasing the quality of TB care in the private sector would increase the number of TB patients in Rajasthan receiving high-quality treatment by more than one lakh over three decades, saving 3,300 lives every year on an average.

Initiatives in Mumbai, Patna and elsewhere have shown it possible to engage the private sector, supported by public funds and overseen by the national TB programme. As the National Surveillance Programme 2017-25 outlines, well over half of TB cases first go to private clinics. Poor compliance and use of inaccurate tests can delay diagnosis, meaning ongoing transmission, while a general lack of treatment support means many private patients do not complete the standard TB regimen.

The average public cost for Rajasthan would be about ₹15.2 crore per year between now and 2050. Every rupee borne by Rajasthan and its population will generate ₹179 of benefits, representing saved lives, fewer people being disabled, and quicker treatment initiation. At present, TB services largely wait for symptomatic patients to show up at a clinic. Going into a vulnerable community can diagnose patients earlier and shorten the period over which they are infectious. The NSP 2017-25 indicates urban slums as a priority. If Andhra Pradesh can save about 2,000 lives each year with private sector engagement, the analysis shows that adding active case finding will save almost twice as many.

While the evidence only shows the remarkable returns for Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh, it points the way for strong and smart action against TB across India.

Bjorn Lomborg is president, Copenhagen Consensus Centre. Manorama Bakshi is senior adviser, the India Consensus project. The views expressed are personal.

The Congress has let things slide in Odisha

If the Grand Old Party remains complacent, 2019 could see a bipolar fight between the BJD and the BJP



RAJESH MAHAPATRA

Congress president, Rahul Gandhi, has finally appointed one of his key aides, former Union minister Jitendra Singh, to take charge of the party's affairs in Odisha.

Singh's appointment comes at a time when the Congress in Odisha, ridden by factional fights, is on the brink of becoming an irrelevant political force. Its local leaders have been routinely deserting the party and walking into the folds of either chief minister Naveen Patnaik's Biju Janata Dal (BJD) or the rival Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). More so, after last year's panchayat elections that saw the BJP emerge as the main opposition to the BJD and the Congress slip to a distant third position.

Odisha goes to the polls next year, concurrently with elections to the Lok Sabha. In 2014, the Congress had reported its worst-ever performance in the state, winning not a single one of the 21 Lok Sabha seats and bagging just 16 of the 147 assembly seats. Its vote share had slipped to 26% from 29% in 2009 and 35% in 2004. As things stand today, it is expected to do even worse in 2019.

Can Singh help reverse the slide? The challenges are many, but there are opportunities as well.

The BJP might have edged past the Congress as the principal opposition in the state, but it is far from emerging as a credible alternative to the ruling BJD. It cannot sell its idea of development to voters in Odisha better than chief minister Naveen Patnaik, who excels in innovating with populist welfare measures. It cannot play the politics of polarisation in Odisha, where Muslims constitute just 2% of the state's population. Also, its politics of cultural nationalism is anathema to the people of Odisha, who take far greater pride in their

THE BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY MIGHT HAVE EDGED PAST THE CONGRESS AS THE PRINCIPAL OPPOSITION IN THE STATE, BUT IT IS FAR FROM EMERGING AS A CREDIBLE ALTERNATIVE TO THE RULING BIJU JANATA DAL

language and culture. In contrast, the Congress is in a position to offer a more credible opposition narrative. Given that it is no longer in power at the Centre, it can also accommodate Odisha's regional aspirations better than the BJP.

That said, the first and immediate task before Singh is to stop the ongoing exodus from the party. He cannot lose time in restructuring the Pradesh Congress Committee and put in place a new president and a viable plan for 2019.

The current lacklustre Congress leadership in the state was to have been changed a year ago, after the panchayat elections. Till date, however, the search for a new, "suitable" leader remains elusive.

Jitendra Singh needs to break the impasse immediately. An interim solution could be to pick one of the 15 MLAs who won in 2014 in the most adversarial conditions the Congress has ever faced in the state, or go by their choice for a new PCC president.

For a solution in the longer run, however, the party will have to work to create new leaders. Over the past 18 years that it has been out of power in the state, the Congress stopped attracting new talent. Leaders coming out of student and youth politics mostly joined the ranks of the ruling BJD, drawn either by the lure of power or the image of a clean leader in Naveen Patnaik. But the BJD is now beginning to get too crowded for aspiring politicians. There is an opportunity for the Congress to cash in. If it doesn't, the BJP will. In fact, the latter is already at it.

A section of the Congress believes that it is too late to fix things for 2019 and that the party should instead focus on rebuilding its organisation for 2024. That would be suicidal.

Even today, if the Congress gets its act together, Odisha could be in for a three-cornered contest in 2019.

The ruling Biju Janata Dal will gain the most in such a scenario, especially in tribal-dominated areas where the Congress used to be strong but the Bharatiya Janata Party has lately gained considerable influence. A three-way fight also benefits the Congress, especially in coastal areas where the BJP has yet to make major inroads.

But if the Congress persists with its complacency, the state will slip into a bipolar fight in 2019. It will then be all about the BJD and the BJP, and analysts would be writing the grand old party's obituary in one more state that was once its stronghold.

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(For a longer version of the article visit, www.hindustantimes.com)

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NURTURING THE SOUL IS AS IMPORTANT AS GETTING GOOD NUTRITION

Jayati Goel

God created us in three parts: spirit, soul and body. What happens to one profoundly affects the others. No doctor will deny that emotional stress can cause physical illness. Anyone with chronic pain will tell you their soul and spirit become heavy. Our body is flesh and blood. The soul is our personality, emotions and mind. The spirit is the core of who we are, the eternal part of us.

One of the things we must do to stay alive is eat. Along with air, water, and sleep, our

bodies need food. The nutrients in food keep us healthy and active. If we neglect to nourish our bodies, our health will inevitably decline. But nurturing the soul is as important as nutrition, exercise and sleep. The soul's purpose is to create emotional growth. The sense of well-being and happiness emanates from the soul to the psyche. Each day you are faced with opportunities to help others, to forgive them, to have compassion for them, to be tolerant of them. Do you seize these opportunities? You nurture your soul by giving to others in a loving way. Each time

you choose to help others, your soul grows. Just as unconditional love is one of the manifestations of soul growth, there are other attributes as well: forgiveness, courage, patience, compassion, generosity and wisdom. An evolved soul requires all of these. Whenever you are able to give of yourself without expecting anything in return, you become a bigger person.

(Inner Voice comprises contributions from our readers. The views expressed are personal)
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