

A Thought for Today

There are many scapegoats for our sins, but the most popular is providence. — MARK TWAIN.

# Last Chance In Ayodhya

Armed with the clear and resounding mandate he has received from the National Integration Council, the Prime. Minister can now redouble his efforts to resolve the Ayodhya dispute within the framework of the principles and provisions set out in the Constitution. His endeavour in this regard has so far been exemplary. Though he has felt let down again and again by the BJP-RSS-VHP combine, he has not given up the hope that those involved in the dispute will resume negotiations even at this tardy hour. The patience he has demonstrated has been variously denounced as a sign of weakness, indecisiveness and worse. But it has served to drive home the point that, given the sensitive nature of the dispute, patience is, if anything, a synonym for political maturity. Mr Narasimha Rao naturally has good reasons to be pleased with the fact that the country's secular forces - which command a formidable numerical strength in Parliament and can thus legitimately claim to speak on behalf of an overwhelming majority of our people — have rallied firmly behind him. All the same, it would be wrong and indeed even dangerous if the mandate of the NIC is interpreted as a free hand given to Mr Rao to stage a confrontation against the Hindutva combine. It is nothing of the sort. The Prime Minister is surely aware that, in the absence of an endorsement from the combine (it unfortunately chose to boycott the meeting), the NIC resolution can go this far but no further.

It is sound insofar as it reiterates the first principles governing the conduct of politics in India. But such reiteration is of little avail when Mr Rao is face-to-face with his party's past record and with present realities on the ground. Thus, the BJP-VHP-RSS combine can ask, altogether pertinently, why the Congress did not think it fit to respect the supreme court on other matters such as the Shah Bano case and the Cauvery dispute. It is well within its rights too when it argues that cases related to Ayodhya pending before the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad high court have dragged on and on though the tearing haste of the BJP tells its own story. Finally, Mr L. K. Advani has gone on record to state that, provided the kar seva is allowed, the disputed structure will be safe and its future could be settled through further negotiations or by any other means. In plain words, Mr Rao and the combine have to find some way to make it possible for the kar seva to take place legally, i.e., firmly outside the areas under litigation. As a quid pro quo the combine would have to agree to refer the fate of the disputed structure to the supreme court and to accept its verdict and not insist on the superiority of faith over law. Until these avenues are thoroughly explored, any talk of a confrontation, including the dismissal of the Kalyan Singh government, will prove to be calamitous. Fortunately, most interventions at the NIC meeting were singularly free of BJP-baiting. This, too, is a happy augury.

## Dakar To Geneva

The declaration adopted at the third summit of the group of 15 developing countries at Dakar suggests that this body has finally begun to display some sense of direction. Although formed to articulate the interests of the South, one reason why the group appeared for a while to be tentative and hesitant is that the global context had changed dramatically since its first summit in 1989. The sudden collapse of the socialist bloc and the unchallenged sway of the capitalist West greatly eroded the bargaining position of the developing world. This happened at a time when much of the developing South was reeling under the burden of indebtedness, the slowdown of the world economy and a rise in protectionism. Not surprisingly, the second summit in Caracas in 1991, with its significance diminished by the absence of five members, adopted a fairly moderate approach towards the North. Though it would be wrong to call its tone confrontationist, the declaration at Dakar is, in contrast, forthright in addressing some key concerns. Thus, while pleading that development should dominate any global agenda, the G-15 rightly criticises the North for deflecting the focus from this issue by linking it with security concerns. The fact that India, unlike last time, played a more active role at the summit is evident from the clause which exhorts the advanced nations not to hinder the transfer of dual-use military technologies needed by the South for peaceful purposes. The U.S., it needs to be recalled, has banned the sale of space technologies to India. It is significant that Brazil and Indonesia joined hands with India at Dakar to protest against attempts to force multilateral regulations on transfer of sophisticated technology.

This closing of ranks augurs well for the South as it must prepare to drive a hard bargain in the Uruguay round of GATT talks to be resumed soon. Now that the U.S. and EEC have sorted out their dispute on farm subsidies, the developing countries face a tough prospect as the G-7 will present a formidable united front. In the past the developing countries lost out because of complete disarray in their ranks. Even Brazil and India could not pull together, notwithstanding the formation of G-15 in 1989. The success of G-15, therefore, will have to be judged by its ability to unite the South at Geneva. Unless it does that, its efforts to persuade the G-7 to resolve the inequities of the global economic system, in general, or the problem of third world debt, in particular, will fail. It also follows that South-South cooperation will continue to remain a pipe-dream.

# Superman-agement

The heroine of a noted Bengali story had to die to prove that she had been alive; now Superman has been killed off to revive interest in the celebrated comic. In an event subjected to as much analytical scrutiny as the presidential cat or even the Madonna book, the kryptonite hero with the identity crisis is finished off by a monster named — surprise, surprise — Doomsday, following a superhyped epic battle that made Kurukshetra seem like a routine slum brawl. The real 'serial' killer is, however, perceived to be detective comics (DC), the holder of the brand-name and thereby of the power of life and death. The end was properly funereal, with issue number 75 sliding off the presses in a coffin-like encasing engraved with the epitaph, "Here lies the world's greatest hero," and complete with black armband. In the USA, death is big business, as several novelists have parodied, and Superman predictably breathed his last to the rising crescendos of the till, ringing in three million copies, compared to the gasping 200,000 of the lingering terminal stages. Even at the height of Superman's post-World War II popularity, sales had not exceeded one million. Having made a financial killing on the death, DC can now get down to bringing Superman back to life, and The New York Times actually asked "a cross-section of imaginative types" to construct a resurrection scenario. Credibility is at a discount when suspension of disbelief is the USP, whether one is dealing with comic-book heroes who can take on a battalion of enemies single-handedly or their soapopera clones hellbent on achieving the same feat vis-a-vis the blonde brigade. The two roles acquire combinant synergy in Dr Camille Paglia's erudite dissertation, Sex, Art and American Culture, where she describes Superman as a "very phallic, glossy, gleamingly hard-edged, hypermasculine figure." Too bad, today's Superwoman isn't overly interested in that kind of thing.

# Mandal Judgment

# Triumph Of Social Justice

By SOLI J. SORABJEE

THE supreme court, by its judg-I ment (six to three) in what is popularly known as the Mandal case, has enunciated far-reaching principles about the scope of Article 16 (4) of our constitution. This provision permits reservation of posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the state, is not adequately represented in the services under the

Reservation of posts is one of the many measures necessary to offset the cumulative consequences of caste discrimination which has been practised for centuries. One consequence of this pernicious system is the monopolisation of state power by the upper castes. The purpose of reservation is to redress this historic imbalance. It is a remedial measure, not a punitive one directed against the higher castes.

According to the majority judgment of the supreme court, delivered by Mr Justice B. P. Jeevan Reddy, the objective underlying Article 16 (4) is the empowerment of the deprived backward communities — to give them a share in the administrative apparatus in the governance of the community. It is not aimed at economic upliftment or alleviation of poverty but, in the words of Dr Ambedkar, is a provision made for the entry of certain communities who have so far been outside the administration and hence the need for their adequate representation in state service. Adequacy is to be judged not by their presence in the lower rung of services but their entry into the higher echelons, the corridors of power. As rightly pointed out by Mr Justice Sawant in his concurring judgment, Art. 16 (4) mandates effective representation and, where a majority of the population is denied its share in actual power, there exists no real democracy.

### Total Strength

What can be the extent of such reservation? Not in excess of 50 per cent except in extraordinary situations. Furthermore, the rule of 50 per cent should be applied each year and cannot be related to the total strength of the class, category, service or cadre as the case may be. Moreover, there should be no reser-

vations in the matter of promotions. Does not the reservation principle sacrifice merit and impair efficiency in administration as was vehemently argued? The majority rejected that argument. Yet it held that on account of the nature of duties attaching to certain posts and positions where merit alone counts it may not be advisable to provide for reservations India service. In such situations the the rule of law.

in technical posts in research organisations, in specialities and superspecialities in medicine and posts of professors, pilots in Indian Airlines and Air-India, scientists and technicians in nuclear and space application. On this aspect the majority judgment appears inconsistent and carries less conviction than the passionate dissent of Mr Justice Thommen supporting the 'Anti-meriterian' theory.

What does the expression, 'backward class of citizens', signify in the absence of any definition in the constitution and how should it be identified? This has been one of the most vexed questions which has confronted the court. No clear-cut answer has been provided. According to the majority the emphasis in Art. 16 (4) is on social, not economic backwardness and, therefore, notwithstanding the fact that social, educational and economic backwardness are closely intertwined in the Indian context. Economic criterion cannot be the sole criterion for ident-

ifving backwardness. Can caste be a factor in determining backwardness? According to the majority, if the real object is to locate backwardness, and if such backwardness is found in a caste, it can be treated as backward. If backwardness is found in any other group, section or class, they too can be treated as backward. A caste can be, and quite often is, a social class. If it is backward socially, it would be a backward class for the purposes of Article 16 (4).

### Crucial Part

The crucial part of the majority judgment is its recognition that, i members of a designated backward class are highly advanced socially, this creamy layer must be excluded from the benefits of reservation because otherwise the disadvantaged and deserving members of that backward class would be deprived of these benefits. However the basis of exclusion should not merely be economic. unless the economic advancement is so high that it necessarily signifies social advancement.

The majority did not approve of the means test or an income ceiling because of its relativeness and varying applications in different parts of the country. Besides, a mere rise in income is not necessarily a rise in social status unless the income is such as to indicate social advancement. These are questions of fact and matters for inquiry. But there are certain posts whose occupants can be treated as socially advanced without any further inquiry, for example, a post in the IAS or the IPS or any other allmember of the designated backward class rises and is no longer socially disadvantaged. His children get full opportunity to realise their potential and are in no way handicapped in the race of life. His salary is such that he is above want. It is but fair and logical that in such a situation his children are not given the benefit of reser-

Applying the principles laid down by the majority, the court ruled that the order dated August 13, 1990, issued by Mr V.P. Singh's government was valid and enforceable subject to the exclusion of the socially advanced members/sections from the notified other backward classes. For this purpose the government of India was directed to specify within four months the bases, applying the relevant and requisite socio-economic criteria for exclusion of the creamy layer.

## **Sole Criterion**

The court struck down that part of the order dated September 25, 1991, issued by the Narasimha Rao government which provided for reservation of ten per cent of the vacancies for other economically backward sections because it is unconstitutional to make economic criterion the sole

The Mandal Commission report was fiercely debated before the court. The majority judgment approves the criteria adopted by the Mandal Commission, but ultimately it did not think it necessary to opine on the correctness and adequacy of the exercise done by it in view of the court's conclusions and directions to the government to constitute a permanent body for entertaining requests for inclusion and complaints of inclusion and under-inclusion in the lists of other backward classes of citizens. To many this was veritably a damp squib, an attempt to skirt the thorny issue. Some view it as an ingenious method of replacing the Mandal report by another one in contrast to those who consider the majority's reticence an act of judicial statemanship.

The judgment cannot satisfy all. It is not and cannot be a panacea for the evils of caste and class discrimination. For that the real remedy must lie in the sensitive hearts and enlightened minds of our people. Nonetheless, this historic judgment is a balanced one and marks a significant step in fulfilling Gandhiji's dream of India in which there shall be no high class and no low class of people. As a declaration of law by the apex court it must be respected and observed by

"Slogans And My Life" By ABHAY R. KUDCHADKAR

TWAS an exceptionally obedient Ichild. When I was told to eat my porridge, I did exactly as I was told. 'Don't go anywhere without permission!," and I asked permission for being allowed even to go to the toilet. "You must not be friends with that boy, he's bad!", and I hurried to take my ball away from the boy in question. "Study well!", and I crammed that detestable anatomy. "You must take up sports!", and I rolled the barbells round the gymkhana not having the strength to lift them. "Join some amateur art group!", and I started singing in a choir though I had an awful voice.

Finally I grew up, finished school, graduated from college, became independent and even got to be an executive. But, having got used to obeying instructions from childhood, I continued to live exactly as I was One nationalised bank advertisement, "Keep your money in the bank!", caught my eye one day and I immediately put my money in the savings account. Then I read a poster which said, "Fly Air-India," and I immediately drew some money out of my account and rushed to the

airport. Landing in a hotel one day 1 saw a poster saying: "Hiking is the best way to relax!," and I bought myself a rucksack then and there and climbed up and down mountain That gives you an idea of how

obedient I was. The minute I saw the "no smoking", sign, I dropped my half-smoked cigarette. As I lifted my head, I saw "no littering", and I bent down to pick up the stub and put it in my pocket. If my jacket started burning, I was not frightened because from childhood I remember "Phone 2900 in case of fire!" One advertisement board flashing "Thums-Up makes it great", caught my attention and so I started drinking Thums-Up only, not even having the slightest inclination to taste other soft drinks.

When the slogan of the day was "Foward, Ever Forward!," I ran infront of everybody. "We'll catch up and outstrip". I rushed headlong trying to leave foreign-made cars behind. "Let's fulfil and overfulfil our quotas!" - and I overfulfilled anything and everything. "All together as one man!" And I gathered

CURRENT TOPICS

about me a group of people like myself all eager to imitate each other. But once there appeared a slogan that perplexed me, it was: "The economy should be economical." I was completely at a loss in the beginning, because I did not know how to respond. After a while I understood it was a model to be copied, and set to work producing 'Science should be scientific", "Art should be artificial," "Mediocrity should be medium," and so on.

I lived without a thought or care in the world, thinking of nothing, just obeying instructions which I found at every step. Then one day they began to disappear: every day there were fewer slogans and directions. I stopped, not knowing what to do next. What if they disappeared altogether? I was told to make my own decisions. But how? I wasn't used to doing that, I was never taught to do that. I'm in a panic, I simply don't know what to do and where to go.

Please, don't ruin me! Have pity! Give me at least one life-saving instruction! How is a man to live without directions?

THE need seen by the south Asian

#### TT is a pity that the tragic assassina-Ition of the Sri Lankan naval chief

has preceded the start of the first international export fair in Colombo - Sri Lanka Expo '92. Notwithstanding the ravages of militants in the north and the east, the largely south-based Sri Lankan economy shows a growth rate of 5.6 per cent. The government, which hopes to make foreign investment a catalyst of growth, has taken many steps to encourage larger inflows. The Greater Colombo Economic Commission ensures the rapid clearance of proposals of which there are now 200 in the pipeline. According to official figures, foreign investments have risen from 55 million dollars in 1990

Lanka Expo

to 385 million in 1991. President Premadasa's 'decade of exports' has achieved notable success. Industrial exports have risen and shown a diversification away from the traditional dependence on tea, rubber and coconut. In addition, Sri Lanka has signed 20 investment promotion agreements with industrialised countries, including one with the United States which is its largest market. The government of Sri Lanka has been keen to emphasise that, except for bursts of terrorist activity, the overall law and order situation is under control. There is no reason to be sceptical about that claim. Visitors to Colombo speak of the orderly nature of life there and the brisk business being carried out in the

tives offered in the EPZs, foreigners a great faith, the danger of zealots on intended for them are not misap-

equity in companies. India has sent a diverse and high-level delegation to Sri Lanka expo, to explore investment opportunities in the three zones. Evidently, Indian businessmen are keen to establish business links with Sri Lanka. Thus, in spite of the civil war in the north, doing business with Sri Lanka is not being seen as a high-risk enterprise.

# **Kampaging Zealots**

66TSLAM is at war on many I fronts!," cried a frenzied speaker at a fundamentalists' gathering in Cairo, calling for the annihilation of the "infidels who rule this country, the Jews, the Christians and the communists!" That this outburst of intolerance is not from Teheran, the epicentre of Islamic revival, but from comparatively moderate Cairo brings home the danger of Islamic fundamentalism becoming a dark force of widespread intolerance. Despite stern measures taken by the Egyptian government, Cairo today has become a clandestine centre for the country's fundamentalists in the suburbs and countryside. The government put on a red alert only when the tourism industry, a major foreign exchange earner, was affected. But the fanatics had been steadily and systematically settling scores with whoever stood in their way. If it was Anwar Sadat who was assassinated in 1981 for his peace bids with Israel, it was writer Faraq Fouda who was gunned down early this year for his secular views.

## **Unreal Contract**

commission on poverty alleviation for a social contract between the state and the poor reflects the magnitude of the problem facing the region. But there is a fundamental flaw in the social contract visualised by the commission. The definition provided by the 18th century French philosopher, Jean Jacques Rousseau, was that a sovereign people establish a contract between them by the operation of their general will which is then reflected in the law of the land. But Rousseau made it clear that certain conditions must be fulfilled before such a contract is possible. One is that each has something and no one has too much-a basic equality of wealth. If this is not the case, Rousseau suggested that the contract becomes corrupted by the rich who see to it they become the sole beneficiaries of the contractual relations with the state

The commission has stated that the 440 million poor are a drag on the economies of south Asia. A "massive endeavour" is therefore needed, but to attempt to formulate a social contract between the state and the poor looks like a theoretical exercise if the conditions for operation of the contract do not exist. The problem posed by the huge mass of south Asian poor — 82 per cent of whom live in rural areas — cannot be tackled merely by social engineering from above. There has to be a simul-Apart from tax and labour incen- cumbs to the barbaric distortions of poor to make sure that the benefits on his head!

#### to India before the budget preparations, clearly indicates WB's stranglehold over Indian economy and speaks volumes for Dr. Manmohan Singh's desperation.

Sir, — The World Bank president,

Mr Lewis Preston's "prophetic" visit

Stifling Growth

Inaugurating the International Asia Pacific Conference he vociferously echoed the sentiments of Mr Preston when he said that customs tariffs should be trimmed to international levels.

Undoubtedly lowering of customs tariffs to 25 per cent from the present 110 per cent will give foreign exporters a chance of a lifetime to take a firmer grip of the Indian market by adding 50 per cent margin on profit and yet scale down their basic rate by 35 per cent of today's level.

With the present tariff of 110 per cent, Indian manufacturers fail to match their rates with those of imported goods. There are widespread fears of recession in the Indian market and consequent loss of jobs.

Liberalisation is indeed good for the industrial health of the country. It does help industries to wake up from the complacency and fight for better quality and sharpen competitive spirit. But to maintain the same excise tariff rates on essential inputs will only stifle growth and bring down the shutters of small and medium-scale industries.

**ZUBIN K. GANDHI** Bombay.

### Fair Rent Bill

Sir, - The old Rent Act formulated in 1947 with the partisan amendment made in February 1973 is unjust. Even in the old law a tenant was liable for eviction if the landlord needed the premises for bona fide occupation. So the provision in the model rent bill for summary eviction of the tenant when the premises are genuinely needed by the owner is no new feature. All flat-owners have not bought the

tenements for perpetually letting them out, but for their future use when their family expands. When the premises were let on a 'leave and licence' basis for a short period in cooperative housing societies on or before February 1, 1973, the licensees had entered into valid agreements and solemnly affirmed that they would hand over vacant and peaceful possession of the premises to the licensors on the expiry of the licence period. But the state government in 1973 made "licensees" as "deemed tenants" or "protected licensees". And the housing society and the tenant to whom the society had allotted the flat were forced to engage in tortuous litigation to recover the premises from these "licensees" who had been let into the premises only as short-term occu-

To give even justice to landlords and tenants, the Maharashtra government should adopt in toto the model rent bill of the Union government. The tenants have been abusing the benefits under the old Rent Act and even short-term licensees of 1973 have been holding on to their premises for 20 years paying the same compensation as in 1973.

The rent controllers and the rent tribunals provided in the new bill will drastically curtail the period of litigation and enable speedy disposal of cases. Exempting cooperative housing society premises from the purview of the Rent Act will enable the societies to recover their premises from non-members and regulate occupation of cooperative society buildings as per the society's by-laws. N. HARIHARAN

Bombay.

Sir, — The prevailing Rent Act has bloated the ego of tenants so much so that even those who could have easily acquired other premises, continue sitting tight. There are cases where government officers eligible for government quarters and staying in private flats, when transferred outstation, leave their families behind to perpetuate tenancy rights; and employees eligible for liberal staff housing loans do not avail such facilities. Even today, tenants are fortunate to have advance notice of an impending legislation, but did the landlords get the same in 1973?

S. CHAKRAVARTY

## Pat On The Back

Sir, - The speed with which Mr Sudhakarrao Naik's government has swooped on MLAs to nab them under TADA is commendable. The recent happenings have left the government with no other alternative but to first put its own house in order by invoking TADA. The drive should be relentless so that Bombayites can live peacefully.

The result of the political patronage enjoyed by the underworld is there for everyone to see. The time has now come for the Congress high command to put on its thinking cap while selecting candidates for elections. This also applies to the selection procedure followed by all political parties. The Maharashtra police have

proved that they are second to none and given a free hand, they can perform their duties efficiently. They too deserve a pat on the back.

R. A. KANTAK Bombay.

## Upside Down

Sir,—Please accept my hearty congratulations for publishing the most appropriate picture of Mr Jawaharlal Nehru on his birth anniversary (November 14). The photograph shows Mr Nehru doing the shirshasana. Mr Nehru who wanted the country to develop on the right track, would find As Egypt too gradually suc- taneous endeavour to empower the it so today, only if he saw it standing

"K. SUBRAMANIAN

# - LETTERS — Sri Lanka: Autumn Of The Matriarch

By MERVYN de SILVA

N no other region of the world has dynastic rule become such a wellentrenched feature of national politics than south Asia. And this, despite the introduction of popular particivalues almost half a century ago. Widows and daughters have played a major role in shaping south Asian destinies.

Right now in Sri Lanka, Mrs Bandaranaike is the central figure in the crisis that threatens to tear apart the SLFP - her assassinated husband's party. Mrs Bandaranaike's age and, more recently her illness, have aggravated the party-cum-opposition crisis. It is not that she has repudiated the idea of family power but because she prefers her second daughter, Chandrika, as her successor.

Chandrika was admitted to the party only recently, whereas her brother, Anura, the youngest in the family, has not only been an MP for 15 years but had served as opposition leader in the 1977-82 Parliament, His debating skills, his mastery of parliamentary procedure and decorum won plaudits from none less than the former President, Mr Jayewardene.

On his return from Oxford, the young Solomon Bandaranaike, a barrister, plunged into pre-independence politics. The party he founded was named, interestingly enough, the Sinhala Maha Sabha, a direct appeal to the majority Sinhala community. But, before the formal transfer of power (1948), he had chosen to work with the father-figure of the Ceylonese national movement, Mr D. S. Senanayake, the leader most trusted by the British. Unlike in other colonies, the transfer was, in fact, a tea party transaction.

#### Unwritten Part

The unwritten part of the pact between Sri Lanka's first Prime Minister and Bandaranaike was that Solomon would be the old man's heir-apparent. This was clear when Bandaranaike was chosen leader of the house. He was, however, given the modest portfolio of local administration. That was the old man's mistake, Bandaranaike told this writer 35 years ago. He used the local bodies (village and urban councils) to widen his mass base and to do some talent-spotting, just in case, Senanayake let him down. In fact, it was soon obvious to Bandaranaike that Senanayake was grooming his son, Dudley, who was much younger than Solomon. He quit the UNP and founded his own Sri Lanka Freedom

In many ways, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike was Nehruvian in his SLFP, and indeed the island, learns outlook, certainly in his world view. to live with the prolonged autumn of He was an anti-colonial nationalist the matriarch.

who had strong views on the freedom struggles in the emerging third World and on the increasingly fierce and dangerous global, ideological conflict between rival power blocs. It was on patory processes and democratic domestic policy that he ran into serious trouble because he could not control the forces that he had unleashed.

As a young man, he was a socialist, fashionably Fabian rather than orthodox Marxist-Leninist. It is this mixed, perhaps confused, legacy of anti-colonial radicalism (he nationalised Colombo port and private bus transport) Sinhala-Buddhist revivalism, non-alignment, mixed economy, and parliamentary democracy, that the SLFP now seeks to pakage once more and offer a new consumer generation, a generation hooked on the IMF-World Banksupported "free market" strategy that Mr Jayewardene adopted.

#### Not Paramount

Economic policy is not the paramount issue, though the Premadasa government's economic performance may well be the decisive factor in the 1994 polls. The more dramatic, attention-getting and emotional issue is the Tamil problem and the challenge of the separatist Tamil Tigers.

The cold-blooded, perfectly planned assassination of Vice-Admiral Clancy Fernando by a Tiger suicide bomber brought home more sharply than ever before a simple message: Colombo is no safe haven. The war must go on but only to convince the Tigers that they cannot impose a unilateral solution either.

The SLFP leadership and the opposition as a whole derive vicarious satisfaction from the President's acute discomfort. He cannot concede the minimum the LTTE may regard as acceptable. And he must carry on with the war regardless lest he should suffer major losses in the majority Sinhala constituency. Mrs Bandaranaike's moment of

glory was 1970 when she led the SLFP and its left allies to a sweeping parliamentary victory. She would like to see history repeated but that requires a grand alliance, particularly with her old left allies. But they demand at least a mixed economy, if not a total rejection, of the IMF-World Bank restructuring programme. Anura regards the left as a liability. Chandrika regards the left and minority (Tamil mainly) support as essential. With the mother's help, she seems to be gaining ground but the damage to party morale and public image is considerable. But Chandrika is the only one of her children who has a child. And so the

VIEWPOINT

# **Gold Imports**

DUBAI is the entrepot centre for gold exports, legal and illegal, to the Indian sub-continent. So the reports currently emanating from there should not be taken lightly. While finance ministry sources in New Delhi have been gloating, week after week, how legal imports of gold have gone on increasing — by October-end the quantity thus imported had reached 65 tonnes, against the target of 35 tonnes for the whole financial year — the reports from Dubai point at the same time to an unabated flow to India of contraband gold. Most recently it has been reported from there that there has been an unprecedented spurt of gold imports into Dubai and whatever quantity of gold is being exported from there to India legally is over and above what India was normally importing through unofficial channels. A senior official of the Dubai-based World Gold Council is reported to have explained the sharp rise in Dubai's gold imports in recent months in terms of the expansion in the demand for gold due to easing of controls on

to India officially is surplus. Smuggling through parallel channels continues to go on.

This cannot but have a serious impact on the country's balance of payments, because it should have meant mobilising additional foreign exchange for the purpose. That there is virtually no let-up in the premium on foreign exchange in the havala market could be taken to reflect the additional demand for gold, partially at least. Also, the fact that, in spite of the steep devaluation of the rupee, export earnings have achieved only a marginal increase whereas imports have expanded sharply could, to some extent if not altogether, be because of the even greater resort than in the past to under-invoicing of exports and over-invoicing of im-The total inflow of gold for the

year, legal and illegal, might then add up to 300 tonnes which at the international price of \$ 350 per ounce should entail a staggering amount of \$ 3.4 billion in foreign exchange. So the whole purpose of the scheme, namely, to move towards a single exchange rate would stand defeated. — Economic And Political Weekly

FROM THE WINCES ARCHIVES **DECEMBER 13, 1944** of warning, by means of beacons and

"FEMALE LAWRENCE" IN NAGA HILLS

gold imports by Pakistan and India.

Much more pointedly, he is reported

to have observed that whatever goes,

IMPHAL, December 9: In rough terrain on a solitary hilltop in the Naga country, a hard two days' march from the nearest white habi-

tation, lives a 30-year-old London woman who organised Naga tribesmen against the Japanese, established a network of observation posts through the North Cachar Hills and supplied the 14th Army with one of its most valuable intelligence The stranger-than-fiction story of

this remarkable woman—some have called her a "female Lawrence"—has now been told by SEAC, the 14th Army troops' newspaper.

Her name is Ursula V. Graham Bower. She is the daughter of Commandar J.G. Bower, D.S.O., a submarine officer and pioneer airman, and her brother is a captain in the marines. For six years she lived alone among the Nagas, studying them, taking photographs and collecting material for a book.

In 1942, when the Japanese came into Naga country, the tribesmen were reputed to be rather shy of British influence. Today, thanks to Miss Bower's firm organisation, they are 100 per cent loyal.

When the Japanese were reported to be within 25 miles of her hilltop headquarters, and she was advised to come out, she replied with a request for 30 more rifles and the signal, "I am going forward to find out what is

happening." She threw out a screen of observation posts and made ready a system runners, so that the army should know from which direction the raid towards the vital Assam railway was

DECEMBER 27, 1944 MARATHI LITTERATEURS From Our Own Correspondent

DHULIA, December 25. The 28th session of the Marathi Literary Conference, held here under the presidency of Mr Warerkar, was attended by 3,000 visitors, including delegates. Mr Pratapshet, a local millowner, inaugurated the conference.





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