

## Course correction – Congress and cow: on M.P. govt's use of NSA The Madhya Pradesh government's use of the NSA for cattle offences is out of line

The detention of five people under the National Security Act in Madhya Pradesh last week, all of them alleged to have committed offences related to cattle laws, amounts to gross misuse of a law meant solely to prevent activities that endanger the country's security or public order. India has unfortunately become habituated to the abuse of preventive detention laws. In recent times, they have been wrongly invoked against political dissenters and vocal critics, with total disregard for constitutional freedoms. The latest instances point to a new form of misuse. This is possibly the first time that a law that provides for a maximum of one year in prison through an executive order without trial or bail is being used against those suspected of offences against cows. The implications are terrifying. It means that law-enforcers will stop at nothing to demonstrate ideological adherence to majoritarian beliefs. This poses a grave danger to the freedom of movement and vocation, as well as the dietary choices, of sections of society that do not share the majority community's reverence for the cow. In the first case in Khandwa district, the police, who recovered a cow carcass, traced three men who had allegedly killed the animal. In the second case, authorities in Agar Malwa district claim there was some disturbance due to two men who were allegedly transporting cows. The ostensible reason to book them under the NSA is that they were likely to cause disruption of peace. This is too flimsy a ground to invoke so stringent a law, especially when there is no evidence of security or order being under grave threat.

In its order last year directing a series of measures against mob violence and public lynching, of which those transporting cows were frequent victims, the Supreme Court had warned against the dangers of a socio-political framework based on disrespect for an inclusive social order, and wanted the state to take preventive and remedial measures. In its apparent eagerness to prevent incidents that may lead to a communal backlash, the **Madhya Pradesh** government is detaining potential victims to prevent them from indulging in provocative acts! In invoking the NSA in respect of minor offences, solely out of fear of aggressive protests by right-wing Hindu groups, the Congress regime in Madhya Pradesh is displaying utter cravenness. It is not clear why the police is not content with prosecuting them under laws that ban cow slaughter. There is some unease among Congress leaders over these actions of the party's new government in the State. However, it is not enough for the party to voice mild disapproval of the Kamal Nath regime's actions: its leadership has to denounce the gross misuse of the law to mollify cow vigilantes and the short-sighted aim of neutralising the BJP's campaign that the Congress is against Hindu beliefs. The State government must revoke the detention.

### Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **Cattle** - cows and bulls kept by farmers for their milk or meat
- **Offence** - a crime or illegal activity for which there is a punishment
- **Out of line** - behaving in a way that other people do not approve of
- **Detention** - the state of being kept in a police station or prison and not being allowed to leave

- **Allege** - to say that something is true or that someone has done something wrong or illegal, even though this has not been proved
- **Solely** - involving nothing except the person or thing mentioned
- **Endanger** - to put someone or something into a situation where they might be harmed or damaged
- **Habituated** - very familiar with something as a result of experiencing it regularly
- **Abuse** - cruel, violent, or unfair treatment, especially of someone who does not have the power to prevent it
- **Preventive** - done so that something does not become worse or turn into a problem
- **Invoke** - to use a law or rule in order to achieve something
- **Dissenter** - someone who strongly disagrees with something
- **Vocal** - relating to the voice, or done with the voice
- **Disregard** - the attitude of someone who does not respect something or consider it important
- **Instance** - an example of something happening
- **Executive order** - an order from the president or a department or official of the government that has the same authority as a law
- **Trial** - the process of examining a case in a court of law and deciding whether someone is guilty or innocent
- **Implication** - a possible effect or result
- **Adherence** - the action of continuing to obey a rule, law, agreement etc
- **Grave** - so serious that you feel worried
- **Vocation** - a strong feeling that you should be doing a particular thing with your life
- **Dietary** - related to the foods that someone eats
- **Reverence** - a strong feeling of respect and admiration for someone or something
- **Carcass** - the body of a dead animal
- **Ostensible** - appearing to be true, or stated by someone to be true, but possibly false
- **Flimsy** - light and not providing very much protection
- **Stringent** - stringent rules or conditions are strict and make you achieve high standards
- **Evidence** - facts or physical signs that help to prove something
- **Mob** - a large crowd of people that is dangerous or difficult to control
- **Lynching** - to kill someone by hanging them by the neck, even though they have not been proved guilty of any crime
- **Transport** - to move people or things from one place to another, usually in a vehicle
- **Preventive** - done so that something does not become worse or turn into a problem
- **Remedial** - intended to improve or correct something
- **Apparent** - easy to see or understand
- **Eagerness** - enthusiasm to do or to have something; keenness.
- **Backlash** - a strong, negative, and often angry reaction to something that has happened, especially a political or social change
- **Victim** - someone who has been harmed, injured, or killed as the result of a crime
- **Indulge** - to allow yourself to have or do something that you enjoy
- **Provocative** - intended to start arguments between people or to make people angry or upset

- **Minor** - not very important in comparison with people or things of the same type
- **Solely** - involving nothing except the person or thing mentioned
- **Aggressive** - behaving in an angry or rude way that shows you want to fight, attack, or argue with someone
- **Protest** - a strong complaint or disagreement
- **Regime** - a system or form of government
- **Cravenness** - lacking the least bit of courage
- **Not content with** - used to say that someone is not satisfied with something which most people would consider to be enough or too much, but wants or does more
- **Slaughter** - the killing of animals, usually for their meat
- **Unease** - a feeling of being nervous, uncomfortable, or unhappy about a situation
- **Denounce** - to criticize someone or something severely in public
- **Vigilante** - someone who tries to catch and punish criminals by themselves, without waiting for the police
- **Neutralise** - to stop something from having any effect
- **Campaign** - a series of actions intended to produce political or social change
- **Revoke** - to officially say that something is no longer legal, for example a law or a document

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## Course correction – **No zero-sum games: on India-U.S. trade hostilities**

### **India and the U.S. must work to halt trade hostilities urgently**

There are alarm bells in India over a possible decision by the U.S. Trade Representative to withdraw the Generalised System of Preferences status. Under this, India is able to export about 2,000 product lines to the U.S. under zero tariff. The revocation of the GSP, which was first extended to India in 1976 as part of a global concession by the U.S. to help developing countries build their economies, will be a blow to Indian exporters, and the biggest in a series of measures taken by the Trump administration against India to reduce its trade deficit. President Donald Trump's case on what he calls "unequal tariffs" from India rests on the trade relationship in favour of India: Indian exports to the U.S. in 2017-18 stood at \$47.9 billion, while imports were \$26.7 billion. The measures are in line with Mr. Trump's campaign promises. On the matter of Harley-Davidson motorcycles, he spoke directly to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on at least three occasions, demanding that India zero out tariffs to match U.S. rates on Indian motorcycles. In March 2018, the U.S. began imposing tariffs on several Indian products, and in April, the USTR began a review of India's GSP status, based on complaints of trade barriers from India it had received from the dairy industry and manufacturers of medical devices. In November the U.S. withdrew GSP status on at least 50 Indian products.

In retaliation, India proposed tariffs of about \$235 million on 29 American goods, but has put off implementing these five times in the past year in the hope that a negotiated trade settlement will come through. The latest deadline expires on March 1. India has also attempted to address the trade deficit with purchase of American oil, energy and aircraft. There have been dozens of rounds of talks

between officials over the past few months, but no breakthrough. U.S. officials say the decision on data localisation for all companies operating in India, and the more recent tightening norms for FDI in e-commerce have aggravated the situation. Both sides should work towards calling a halt to trade hostilities and speed up efforts for a comprehensive trade “package”, rather than try to match each concern product by product. The U.S. must realise that India is heading into elections, and offer more flexibility in the next few months. India must keep in mind that the larger, global picture is about U.S.-China trade issues, and if a trade deal with the U.S. is reached, India could be the biggest beneficiary of business deals lost by China. The visit of U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross to India this week will be watched not as much for substance, as for signals that New Delhi and Washington understand the urgency in breaking the deadlock.

### Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **Zero-sum game** - a situation in which one person can win only what another person loses
- **Hostility**- opposition to something
- **Alarm bell** - something that makes you feel something unpleasant or dangerous is going to happen
- **Export** - the practice or business of selling goods to another country
- **Tariff** - a tax that a government charges on goods that enter or leave their country
- **Revocation** - the act of saying officially that an agreement, law, etc. is no longer in effect
- **Concession** - something you give or allow to someone in order to reach an agreement
- **Exporter** - a person, business, or country that sells goods to another country
- **Trade deficit** - a situation in which a country is buying more things from other countries than it is selling to them
- **Import** - a product from another country, that is bought with money from your country
- **In line with** - similar to someone or something
- **Retaliation** - the act of doing something harmful or unpleasant to someone because they have done something harmful or unpleasant to you
- **Negotiate** - to try to reach an agreement by discussing something in a formal way, especially in a business or political situation
- **Address** - to give attention to or deal with a matter or problem
- **Deficit** - the difference between the amount of money or goods that a country or business has and the amount that it has spent or that it owes
- **Breakthrough** - a discovery or achievement that comes after a lot of hard work
- **Aggravated** - an aggravated crime has features, such as the use of violence, that make it worse
- **Comprehensive** - including many details or aspects of something
- **Urgency** - the need to deal with something quickly
- **Deadlock** - a situation in which neither person or group involved in a disagreement is willing to change their opinions or position

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## Course correction – **Welcome shift: on Muzaffarpur shelter home trial**

### **The transfer of the Muzaffarpur shelter home trial to Delhi is a major step towards justice**

The Supreme Court's order transferring the trial in the Muzaffarpur shelter home case from Bihar to a court in Delhi is a welcome intervention to ensure justice for the children who were sexually exploited. The Central Bureau of Investigation had argued that the trial would not be fair if it was held in Muzaffarpur. In shifting it to a court notified under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act at Saket in Delhi, the apex court has once again demonstrated its lack of confidence in the Bihar government. It had transferred the investigation from the State police to the CBI. Later, it asked the agency to take over the probe in respect of 16 other shelter homes for children, destitute women and senior citizens. These interventions had become necessary, given the apparent apathy of the authorities in Bihar even after horrific instances of physical and sexual exploitation came to light last year. The Bihar government asked the Tata Institute of Social Sciences to audit the short-stay and shelter homes, run by non-governmental organisations but funded by the government. Last year, TISS came up with a damning report on the unsafe conditions in which children were staying in many shelter homes. The Muzaffarpur home was among the worst: many girls reported physical and sexual violence. More than 30 girls below 17 have been sexually assaulted.

However, the subsequent response of the State government has not inspired much confidence. Apart from some officials being suspended, and some of those involved arrested, the State government did not have much to show as stringent action. Its response came under adverse scrutiny. A Bench of the Supreme Court found that 11 FIRs mentioned only minor offences, that is, "the least serious" of the offences involved. In the Muzaffarpur case, the court took note of the clout of Brajesh Thakur, whose NGO ran the shelter home concerned. The girls in the shelter identified Chandrasekhar Verma, the husband of former Social Welfare Minister Manju Verma, as a frequent visitor. The Verma couple later surrendered to the authorities. It is disquieting and significant that the court had to order Thakur's transfer to a prison in Patiala to prevent him from exerting his influence on the authorities in **Bihar**. The court is also separately monitoring the functioning of child care homes in Bihar. Meanwhile, it is high time that States bestowed sufficient attention to such institutions. A recent Central government committee report highlighted the shocking inadequacies in the facilities available at most child care institutions and homes. There is a strong case for a systematic scrutiny to be taken up on an urgent basis to address the problem.

#### **Meanings of Difficult Words :**

- **Trial** - the process of examining a case in a court of law and deciding whether someone is guilty or innocent
- **Major** - important, serious, large, or great
- **Intervention** - a situation in which someone becomes involved in a particular issue, problem etc in order to influence what happens
- **Ensure** - to make certain that something happens or is done

- **Exploit** - to treat someone unfairly in order to get some benefit for yourself
- **Bureau** - an organization that provides information or services
- **Apex** - the top or highest part of something
- **Agency** - a government department, or an organization connected with a government, that deals with a particular subject
- **Destitute** -with no money or possessions
- **Apparent** - easy to see or understand
- **Apathy** - a feeling of having no interest in or enthusiasm about anything, or of not being willing to make any effort to change things
- **Horrific** - so shocking that it upsets you
- **Audit** - a careful examination of something
- **Damning** - showing that something is wrong or bad, or that someone has done something wrong or bad
- **Assault** - to attack someone violently
- **Subsequent** - happening or coming after something else
- **Apart from** - except for someone or something
- **Stringent** - stringent rules or conditions are strict and make you achieve high standards
- **Adverse** - negative, unpleasant, or harmful
- **Scrutiny** - careful examination of someone or something
- **Minor** - not very important in comparison with people or things of the same type
- **Clout** - the authority to make decisions, or the power to influence events
- **Disquieting** - making you feel very worried or nervous
- **Exert** - to use influence, authority, or power in order to affect or achieve something
- **Meanwhile** - at the same time
- **It's high time that** - used for saying that something should be done soon, because it is already past the time when it should have been done
- **Bestow** - to give something as an honor or present
- **Inadequacy** - the failure to be of the quantity or quality needed for a particular purpose
- **Address** - to give attention to or deal with a matter or problem

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## course correction – **A curious bid: on Thailand's general election** **The Thai general election will determine the military's power in the new set-up**

The rather unusual move by a member of Thailand's royal family to announce a bid for the office of Prime Minister has ignited greater interest in the country's general election. Ubolratana Rajakanya, King Maha Vajiralongkorn's sister, subsequently had her nomination withdrawn — but the fact that the prospect drew a public disapproval from the King is an indication of how closely the palace is tracking the contest. The larger question concerning the March 24 poll is the prospect of Thailand's credible return to civilian rule, after the 2014 military coup that deposed the government of Yingluck Shinawatra. The military general-turned-Prime Minister, Prayuth Chan-ocha, is contesting as the



candidate of the Palang Pracharat party, known for its pro-military and pro-palace leanings. The constitution drafted by his ruling National Council for Peace and Order, and ratified in a 2016 popular referendum, introduced a voting system that provides for a wholly nominated Upper House of Parliament and allotment of seats to army officers. King Vajiralongkorn had granted approval for its promulgation only after withholding some other controversial provisions. The March general election has been long overdue, as General Prayuth repeatedly deferred the dates since seizing power in 2014. Moreover, investigations into social media content from the new Future Forward party have added to worries about the junta silencing Opposition voices. While the bid to hand over power to an elected government may seem well-intended, the power given to the military in the legislature remains a concern.

Ms. Ubolratana had entered the fray with the Thai Raksa Chart party, which is linked to exiled former Prime Ministers, the telecommunications tycoon Thaksin Shinawatra and his sister Yingluck. The Shinawatras are perceived to be a challenge to the Bangkok elite, including the palace and the military. But despite being evicted from power in coups, they still hold sway among the predominantly rural electorate. Till now, the military had struggled to dent their chances sufficiently, and Mr. Shinawatra or his proxies won every election since the early 2000s. The new constitution ensures that the military will be a crucial determinant in a democratic transition. King Vajiralongkorn's public response to his sister's decision to contest the election may also affect the chances of Mr. Shinawatra's party. Ms. Ubolratana had relinquished her royal title in the 1970s, but her candidature sparked speculation about an understanding between the palace and Mr. Shinawatra. The March election is being watched keenly across the region. The second largest economy in Southeast Asia, Thailand this year assumes the presidency of ASEAN, that sets a broad economic and political agenda for member-states. A number of them are so-called guided democracies, with a pre-eminent role for the military.

### **Meanings of Difficult Words :**

- **Curious** - unusual and interesting
- **Determine** - to control what something will be
- **Rather** - to a fairly large degree
- **Ignite** - to start a fight or argument
- **Subsequently** - after something else happened
- **Prospect** - the possibility that something will happen
- **Credible** - able to be believed or trusted
- **Coup** - an occasion when a group of people takes control of a country, usually by means of military force
- **Leaning** - a tendency to prefer, support, or be interested in a particular idea or activity
- **Ratify** - to make an agreement official by signing it or formally accepting it
- **Referendum** - an occasion when everyone in a country can vote to make a decision about one particular subject
- **Promulgation** - to make an idea or belief known to as many people as possible
- **Withhold** - to deliberately not give something to someone
- **Long overdue** - if something is overdue, it should have been done before now

- **Defer** - to arrange for something to happen at a later time than you had planned
- **Seize** - to suddenly and firmly hold someone by a part of their body or clothing
- **Junta** - a group of military officers that governs a country, usually without having been elected
- **Concern** - a feeling of worry about something, especially one that a lot of people have about an important issue
- **Fray** - a fight or argument, esp. one in which several people take part
- **Exile** - to force someone to live in a foreign country, usually for political reasons
- **Tycoon** - a rich and powerful person who is involved in business or industry
- **Perceive** - to understand or think about something in a particular way
- **Elite** - a small group of people who have a lot of advantages and keep the most power and influence
- **Despite** - used for saying that something happens even though something else might have prevented it
- **Evict** - to force someone to leave somewhere
- **Hold sway** - to be the main influence on people's opinions or behaviour
- **Predominantly** - mainly, or mostly
- **Proxy** - someone who has the authority to do something for you, especially to vote
- **Ensure** - to make certain that something happens or is done
- **Transition** - the process of changing from one situation, form, or state to another
- **Relinquish** - to give up your power, position, or an advantage, especially when you do not want to do this
- **Speculation** - ideas or discussion about why something has happened or what might happen
- **So-called** - used for showing that you think a word used for describing someone or something is not suitable
- **Pre-eminent** - better or more important than anyone or anything else in a particular activity

☞ " " " SUCCESS IS NO ACCIDENT.

IT IS HARD WORK, PERSEVERANCE, LEARNING, STUDYING, SACRIFICE AND MOST OF ALL, LOVE OF WHAT YOU ARE DOING. " " ☞