



## Royal flush

The reasons behind the Saudi Crown Prince's surprise crackdown are still not clear

Ever since he was named the defence minister of Saudi Arabia in 2015, Mohammed bin Salman has had little patience for the way the kingdom is being ruled. In June, two and a half years into the reign of his father King Salman, he replaced Mohammed bin Nayef as Crown Prince. In recent weeks, he had taken on the Salafi religious establishment. On Sunday he sprang another surprise by ordering the arrest of senior government ministers, officials and 11 Princes, including the billionaire Alwaleed bin Talal, and the powerful chief of the National Guard, Mutaib bin Abdullah. The immediate reason for the arrests is not known. The palace version is that they were carried out as part of a new campaign against corruption that is spearheaded by Prince Mohammed. But the recent crackdowns suggest that Prince Mohammed is consolidating his power. He first had Prince Nayef removed from his path to the throne as Crown Prince. As one of the richest among Saudi royals, Prince Alwaleed is known for his cosy ties with Western governments and less conservative views. Prince Mutaib, a favourite son of the late King Abdullah, is an influential figure within the palace. By arresting both, Prince Mohammed has potentially neutralised the money and power centres that could pose challenges to him in the future.

With the latest arrests, at just 32 years of age Prince Mohammed appears to have established himself as the most powerful Saudi Crown Prince in decades. He is practically in charge of key policy decisions and has taken control of all branches of the Saudi security services – the military, internal security and the National Guard. He clearly has the King's ear. Still, Prince Mohammed is playing a risky game. In a short span of time, he has opened multiple fronts in the still-unfolding internal power struggle. In Saudi Arabia, where the rulers traditionally distribute power among the different branches of the royal family as a balancing tactic and get their decisions approved by the *ulema* for legitimacy, Prince Mohammed's moves are upending tradition. By concentrating power in his own hands and turning against other Princes as well as some clerics, he has upset the balance in the system. Quick consolidation of power could perhaps allow him to reshape the governance model. The anti-corruption campaign, which sounds much like that led by Chinese President Xi Jinping, will have popular support, which he could use to continue to target his rivals. But Prince Mohammed's track record so far is devoid of any major achievement. His ambitious plan to reform the economy has been a non-starter. His foreign policy moves also backfired with the Yemen war spinning further out of control and the Syrian civil war turning in favour of President Bashar al-Assad, who is seen as an adversary by Riyadh. If he continues to make mistakes the game could go awry, triggering an open power struggle within the House of Saud. With the Riyadh-Tehran rivalry in West Asia hotting up again, these developments are also bound to have repercussions beyond Saudi Arabia.

## Girl power

The women's hockey team presents the best reason for enhanced support, by winning

India may have won the final of the women's Asia Cup hockey tournament against China in a penalty shootout, but it was a fully deserving victory. Throughout their campaign in Japan, team members played out of their skin to register the win, which has secured them a spot in next year's World Cup emphatically on merit, not as wild-card entrants. The triumph came against formidable hurdles, and in the absence of any expectations. Indian women were never the favourites, going into the tournament ranked 12th in the world and fourth in Asia – behind World No. 8 China, Korea and Japan. Incidentally, India defeated defending champion Japan in the semi-finals. This happened despite a degree of pre-tournament disarray. The team lost its second coach in the space of a year, and Harendra Singh came to the assignment just a month before the Asia Cup, that too with no previous experience of having worked with a women's hockey team. The team had other issues to grapple with as well; the fitness and skill levels had slipped. The lack of expectations, sadly, was clear from the fact that there was no live telecast, not even online streaming. Such live updates as there were came via social media.

The hockey federations must heed this victory and use this occasion to considerably scale up support to the women's game. The insistence on appointing foreign coaches, despite the clear discomfort and disconnect among the women in matters of communication, has unnecessarily cost India too much time. The inadequate competitive exposure made available for the team was unfortunate. Unlike the men, women players start early; some in the senior team are as young as 16. Their careers often end early. That the women, most of them in their early 20s, still continue to go out and give their best is a testament to their dedication. Railways remains the biggest provider of employment – but goal-keeper Savita Punia, the star of the final, and a veteran of over 100 matches and perhaps Asia's best, is yet to get a job. Harendra Singh has his work cut out too. He has a reputation for being obsessed with results. He is a disciplinarian who has the ability to coax the best from his players, lead from the front and put in the hard yards. In fact, it is a reflection of the team's hard work, dedication, discipline and focus on the game that someone who is regarded as the most difficult Indian coach to work with is already in awe of his players. The road ahead is arduous, and 2018 will be crucial for the women and men, with the World Cup and the Commonwealth Games as well as an Olympic spot to be secured through the Asian Games. Captain Rani Rampal's girls have shown they can do it.

# The varied legacy of a revolution

Much of it has been horrific for the people of Russia, and benign for the rest of the world



PULPAPRE BALAKRISHNAN

A century ago, on November 7, the world was shaken by a revolution in Russia. Public recollection on the centenary has been scanty in India thus far, perhaps out of the fear that remembering the Russian Revolution is tantamount to endorsing its outcomes. But that would be a sentimental approach to history. Historical events are to be evaluated in terms of their consequences.

### Most of it horrific

There is no gainsaying that the revolution in Russia was momentous (*Picture, taken in October 1917, shows armed soldiers, with a banner reading 'Communism', marching on Nikolskaya street towards the Kremlin Wall in Moscow*). However, if we are to think of a legacy we might say that it has been both horrific and benign, much of it having been horrific for the people of Russia and some of it benign for the rest of the world. After a brief interregnum of endless possibilities in the early 1920s, the vacuum created by the death of Lenin was taken advantage of by Josef Stalin to assume power. For the next three decades, his role was not unlike that of the Tsar who had been deposed. The opposition was annihilated, labour camps for dissidents established, the free press disbanded and the peasantry dispossessed.

Among the nationalities, the Ukrainians who had once dreamt of independence were suppressed. The method was not just ruthless, it was innovative. Upon Stalin's orders, grain was shipped out of their country to the rest of the Soviet Union, causing famine and deaths. A people were crushed. What the Ukrainians faced as a people was the treatment meted out to individual Russians who opposed the



RUSSIAN STATE DOCUMENTARY FILM AND PHOTO ARCHIVE VIA AP

dictator. Termed 'enemies of the people', they were stripped of all human agency when they were not marched off to Siberia. There among the tasks assigned to them would be to work nickel mines with their bare hands in sub-zero temperature. In a history reminiscent of the Third Reich, gypsies, Jews and homosexuals found themselves in Stalin's labour camps, the only difference being that Hitler had reserved a place also for the communists in his.

It may be said that some of Stalin's actions were no different from those of the European regimes in their colonies. While this is indeed correct, the colonial powers had not come into being promising emancipation of the oppressed. Churchill may have sucked grain out of Bengal thus tipping it into famine, but then he was unabashedly racist. On the other hand, the communist movement that eventually gave birth to the Russian Revolution was premised on the promise of power to the people. Instead, under Stalin, it gave rise to a bureaucracy, the rationale of which was to maintain the regime perpetrated by the communist party.

Despite the avowedly internationalist stance of the Comintern, Stalin was not sympathetic to the Indian national movement, painting it as bourgeois in character. It is odd therefore that the Communist

Party of India chose to support the British government during the Quit India movement launched by the Congress, ostensibly on grounds that an Allied Victory held out greater prospects for Indian independence. Perhaps they were unaware of Churchill's speech in the House of Commons in 1942: "I have not become the King's First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire...." Or perhaps the Indian communists just chose to follow their captain, who having once signed a non-aggression pact with Hitler, was later to fall out with him.

### Sets of reforms

After the death of Stalin, the former Soviet Union went through two rounds of reforms. The first was under Khrushchev and the other under Gorbachev. Following the latter, the country imploded and we are now left with Russia alone, most of the republics having gone their own way. The diminution of the former Soviet Union is of lesser importance than the fact that the political climate in what remains of its core, namely Russia, did not change.

It is moot whether the Russia under Vladimir Putin today is a major change from the Russia under the Romanovs. A once-proud civilisation is now ruled by a former secret-service agent. Mr. Putin represents the very spirit that the re-

# Plotting social progress

We need a cohesive measure of social progress in individual States



AMIT KAPOOR & MANISHA KAPOOR

The accomplishments of modern India are recognised around the world. A country that was a symbol of hunger and poverty at the time of Independence and admonished for its Hindu rate of growth during the initial decades has now transformed itself into one of the fastest growing major economies.

These economic achievements are extensive, especially when considering the challenges that arose from following democratic governance after decades of oppressive colonial rule and being a multi-religious secular entity. But the potential for growth remains strong despite some slackening.

### Still unquantified

The societal reach of this economic growth still remains unquantified. There have been efforts to track individual social outcomes such as

health, education and safety. For instance, the National University of Educational Planning and Administration and the Government of India (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of School Education and Literacy) compute an Educational Development Index for primary and upper primary levels of education that compare States on different aspects on education universalisation. Similarly, NITI Aayog has rolled out the health, education and water index. Apart from these individual indices, there have also been efforts to look at progress through the lens of a human development index but that does not isolate the impact of economic growth. A common measure to quantify the social progress of Indian States that can pinpoint the achievements and the challenges is still missing.

### Some insights

A Social Progress Index could bridge this gap. We ranked States using social and environmental indicators on the basis of their capability to provide for basic needs such as shelter, water, and sanitation; a foundation for well-being with education, health, and com-



munication facilities; analysing the prejudices that prevail in a region prohibiting people from making their personal decisions; and evaluating whether citizens have personal rights and freedom or whether they are susceptible to child labour, human trafficking, corruption, etc.

The study (2005-2016) helps analyse whether States, especially using social and environmental indicators, are heading in the right direction. It is also essential to help adjust policies as well as public and private investments.

First, the overall social progress score for the country now stands at 57.03 (on a 0-100 scale), approximately eight points higher than in 2005. The country performs better

in the provision of basic human needs rather than opportunities for its citizens. Therefore, creation of a society with equal opportunities for all still remains an elusive dream. But it is encouraging to note that the scores for opportunity have increased over the years followed by smaller, but important improvements in the areas of basic human needs and foundations of well-being.

Second, all the States have climbed the social progress ladder, with the group of States that had the worst performance in 2005 – Tripura, Meghalaya, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Bihar – now showing improvement. This suggests that States with a relatively low level of social progress can improve rapidly. Similarly, in States that have achieved a threshold level of social progress, driving improvements becomes more difficult. This is backed by the fact that average improvement is the lowest among the group of States that were categorised as "Very High Social Progress" in 2005.

The third major finding is that the greatest improvements have been in areas where social progress most often accompanies eco-

nomic prosperity. On the other hand, areas where performance has declined or stagnated is where the correlation with economic development is weak. For instance, "Access to Information & Communication and Inclusion" depicts a strong relationship with per capita GDP and are the ones that have improved the most over the years. And "Health and Wellness & Environmental Quality", that are least correlated with economic development, have eroded. This suggests that States should focus on policies that target social issues. The focus on economic parameters will result in unbalanced social development.

The overall findings show that while the economy is on the right track, there is an urgent need to identify and focus on social parameters. The reliance on the idea that economic development will automatically transform social conditions will hamper further improvements in social progress. Social progress needs to be stimulated by focussing on policies directly targeting social issues.

Amit Kapoor is chair, Institute for Competitiveness, India. Manisha Kapoor is a senior researcher at the same institute

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

### Chennai sinking

The Editorial, "Marooned once more" (November 6), was apt. But here are more suggestions. The government should permit individuals or groups to utilise free of cost the silt from the reservoirs and tanks. Some guidelines and rules can be stipulated. The top half foot of silt can be used as agriculture input. The next layer, of a foot after this, can be used for making bricks. The next two feet can be used for laying roads and construction purposes. The Tamil Nadu government should also persuade both public and private sector companies operating in Tamil Nadu to use corporate social responsibility funds to clean the Cooum river, the Buckingham canal and other canals in the city.

N.S. VENKATARAMAN,  
Chennai

### Cleaning up politics

The conclusion of the article, "Seize the

opportunity" (November 6), assumes that there will be a trickle-down effect, resulting in better governance. However the question that arises is this: are we setting the right precedent? There is a pile of cases pending in Supreme Court affecting all classes of citizens. Therefore, why isn't the judiciary expediting hearing and conclusion in these cases? There has been a number of high profile cases reported in the media that have shown the huge fault lines in the process. Therefore, rather than only expediting cases involving politicians, there is an even greater need to expedite judicial reforms such as time-bound justice, shorter intervals during proceedings and respite from delayed judicial appointments. Many of the reforms in the judiciary don't require the legislative approval.

SHREYANSH JAIN,  
Chandigarh

■ Criminalisation of politics

is a blot on democracy. Corrupt candidates use money, political power, caste and religion-based mobilisation to lure and/or coerce the electorate to vote for them. What could be expected from such lawmakers? The Supreme Court is our only ray of hope. It must uphold its impartial and independent character and vigorously pursue compliance of its earlier judgments. The momentum gained must not be lost but should culminate in injunctions based on a strong legal footing against such unethical practices.

NISHANT CHOUDHARY,  
Naandla, Ajmer, Rajasthan

### A year of note ban

Demonetisation has turned out to be a mixed bag. Unfortunately, there are numerous political attempts to tar it with a political brush, confusing the common man. The BJP is proposing to celebrate the anniversary of demonetisation as "anti-

black money day", while the Opposition wants to dub it "black day". For the BJP, it has been a bold move that rests on four pillars: to fight black money, corruption, terrorism and promote the digital economy. But these pillars are turning out to be cardboard pillars as the exercise has thrown up a series of challenges. There has been a slowing down of economic growth, a loss of jobs and untold suffering for the common man. The BJP and the Opposition should stop treating demonetisation as a testing ground for settling political scores. Instead, they should together identify the loopholes in what is now an irreversible move and work on a strategy to help improve the economic situation.

S.V. VENKATKRISHNAN,  
Bengaluru

### Shuttlers rise

Indians are gradually waking up to the reality that there are games other than cricket in this country that

could be as fascinating, if not better. The immense popularity of badminton as a sport appears to have attracted many a youngster into its fold and now boasts of a players' roster that could do any nation proud. With Saina, Sindhu, Kashyap and K. Srikanth's international exploits continuing unhindered, India appears to be fast becoming a dominant presence in world badminton. It is not as if the game was not played in India earlier. But then this has been the story with almost all sports, except cricket of course. It is time

our sporting federations foundways to ensure that public adulation is not only reserved for cricket. After the astounding success of the Indian Premier League, various other sporting associations too have introduced the league format, and with soaring popularity. The popularity of any sport brings in commercial involvement, which in turn guarantees the participation of big names. Indian sport is in for a grand rejuvenation.

PACHU MENON,  
Comba, Margao, Goa

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### CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

We erred: In the Corrections and Clarifications column dated Nov. 6, 2017, the publication date of the entry regarding Mukul Roy joining the BJP was wrongly given as Nov. 3, 2015. It should have been Nov. 4, 2017.

A Sports page report headlined "Sehwag gate opens at Kotla" (Nov. 1, 2017) erroneously said that *Gate No. 3* was named after the legendary opening batsman Virender Sehwag. It was *Gate No. 2*.

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-28552963; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers' Editor, The Hindu, Kasturi Buildings, 859 & 860 Anna Salai, Chennai 600 002, India. All communication must carry the full postal address and telephone number. No personal visits. The Terms of Reference for the Readers' Editor are on www.thehindu.com