

Media and sedition: On Supreme Court relief

1. Strident: स्ट्राइडन्ट

(Used about a voice or a sound) loud and unpleasant

(स्वर या ध्वनि) तीव्र और कर्णकटु; कानफोड़, तीक्ष्ण

SIMILAR: harsh, raucous, rough, grating, rasping, jarring.

2. Disaffection

A state or feeling of being dissatisfied, especially with people in authority or a system of control.

"There is growing **disaffection with** large corporations"

Similar: dissatisfaction, disgruntlement, discontent, restlessness, frustration.

3. Disloyalty

बेवफ़ाई, अनिष्ठा

Infidelity, betrayal

4. Archaic: आ'केइक्

very old-fashioned; no longer used

पुरातनपंथी; वर्तमान में अप्रचलित

5. Intemperate

Having or showing a lack of self-control; immoderate.

"Intemperate outbursts concerning global conspiracies"

Similar: immoderate, excessive, undue, inordinate, unreasonable, unjustified, unwarranted, uncalled for.

Given to or characterized by excessive indulgence, especially in alcohol.

"An intemperate social occasion"

6. Quash: क्वॉश्

To say that an official decision is no longer true or legal

आधिकारिक निर्णय को रद्द कर देना

To stop or defeat something by force

बल प्रयोग से किसी को दबा या कुचल देना

To quash a rebellion

SIMILAR: cancel, reverse, rescind, repeal, revoke, retract, countermand, withdraw, take back.

7. Disapprobation

Strong disapproval, typically on moral grounds.

"She braved her mother's disapprobation and slipped out to enjoy herself"

Similar: disapproval, dislike, dissatisfaction, disfavour, displeasure, distaste.

8. Connote

(Of a word) imply or suggest (an idea or feeling) in addition to the literal or primary meaning.

"The term 'modern science' usually connotes a complete openness to empirical testing"

Similar: imply, suggest, indicate, signify, have overtones of, have undertones of, hint at, give a feeling of, have an aura of, have an atmosphere of, give the impression of.

(Of a fact) imply as a consequence or condition.

"Spinsterhood connoted failure"

9. Pernicious: प'निशस्

Having a very harmful or evil effect on somebody/something, in a way that is slow and not easily noticeable

(प्रभाव आदि) हानिकारक; घातक; विनाशकारी

10. Iteration

The repetition of a process or utterance.

Repetition of a mathematical or computational procedure applied to the result of a previous application, typically as a means of obtaining successively closer approximations to the solution of a problem.

A new version of a piece of computer hardware or software.

plural noun: **iterations**

11. Minion

An unimportant person in an organization who has to obey orders; a servant

(संगठन में) आदेशों का पालन करनेवाला एक आम आदमी; नौकर

SIMILAR: underling, henchman, flunkey, lackey, hanger-on, follower, camp follower, servant, hireling, vassal, stooge, creature, toady, sycophant, flatterer.

12. Take something in stride

To deal with (something difficult or upsetting) in a calm way I thought she'd be upset, but she has **taken** the news in **stride**.

13. Put down

Stop holding something and place it on a surface or the ground.

"Harry put down his cup"

Record something in writing.

"he's putting a few thoughts down on paper"

Similar: write down, put in writing, note down, make a note of, jot down, take down.

14. Vanity: वैनटि

The quality of being too proud of your appearance or abilities

घमंड, दंभ (अपनी अकल या शकल का)

SIMILAR; conceit, conceitedness, self-conceit, narcissism, self-love, self-admiration, self-regard, self-absorption, futility,

Uselessness.

15. Fig leaf

A metaphorical **fig leaf** is something visible but innocuous, as against a coverup in which the existence of something may be entirely hidden. In the context of negotiation, an offer might be characterized as a "**fig leaf**" if that offer is actually a ploy to conceal a sinister plan.

16. Overboard

Too widely applicable or applied: excessively broad.

An **overbroad** interpretation of the statute

A litigant challenging an **overbroad** law.

17. Come down

To fall down

नीचे गिरना

The power lines came down in the storm.

(Used about an aircraft or spacecraft) to land

(विमान या अंतरिक्षयान का) धरती पर उतरना

The helicopter came down in a field.

Media and sedition: On Supreme Court relief

The Supreme Court's rulings on cases of sedition give hope the law will be re-examined

It has long been recognised that strident criticism of government will not amount to an attempt to excite disaffection and disloyalty towards government. Yet, the archaic and colonial view that an intemperate attack on an incumbent ruler should be met with fierce prosecution for sedition prevails among many in power even today. In a significant judgment, the Supreme Court has **quashed a criminal case registered in Himachal Pradesh against journalist Vinod Dua** by invoking the narrowed-down meaning of what constitutes an offence under **Section 124A of the IPC**, the provision for sedition, set out in *Kedar Nath Singh (1962)*. Every journalist, the Court has ruled, is entitled to the protection of that judgment, which said “comments, however strongly worded, expressing disapprobation of actions of the Government, without exciting those feelings which generate the inclination to cause public disorder by acts of violence, would not be penal”. The law on sedition has come a long way from the formulation of British-era judges Comer Petheram and Arthur Strachey that “feelings of disaffection” towards the government connote “absence of affection... hatred, enmity, dislike, hostility... and every form of ill-will towards the government” to the more rational reading that only a pernicious tendency to create public disorder would be an offence. Yet, it appears that every generation needs a judicial iteration of this principle, and that is because of two reasons: that Section 124A remains on the statute book and that powerful political figures and their minions are unable to take criticism in their stride.

Enacted to put down journalistic criticism of the colonial administration from an increasingly vocal press, Section 124A is essentially **a provision which seeks to protect the government's institutional vanity** from disapprobation using the interests of public order and security of the state as a fig leaf. It has often been criticised for being vague and “overbroad”. Its use of terms such as “bringing (government) into hatred or contempt” and “disloyalty and all feelings of enmity” continues to help the police to invoke it whenever there is either strong criticism or critical depiction of unresponsive or insensitive rulers. The explanation that disapproval of government actions or measures with a view to altering them by lawful means will not amount to an offence is not enough to restrain the authorities from prosecution. The mischief lies in the latitude given to the police by an insecure political leadership to come down on the government's adversaries. It is unfortunate that the Bench did not go into the aspect of political motivation behind the police registering FIRs without checking if the required ingredient of incitement to violence is present. The Court's verdict brightens the hope that the section's validity will be re-examined. For now, it is a blow for free speech and media freedom.

Diminishing options: On RBI's June 2021 policy statement

The RBI has little room to use interest rates for achieving policy outcomes

The RBI's latest policy statement underscores the diminishing options available to it to address the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. The bank's **Monetary Policy Committee left benchmark interest rates unchanged** for a sixth straight meeting and reiterated that it would keep its policy stance accommodative ‘as long as necessary to revive and sustain growth on a durable basis’. Since its **May 2020 decision to cut interest rates** by 40 basis points, taking the cumulative reduction in borrowing costs in the wake of the pandemic's onset to 115 basis points, the MPC has found itself in a bind. While the first lockdown constricted supply and demand for much of Q1 of the last fiscal, pushing the economy into **a record 24.4% contraction** during April-June and **causing full-year GDP to shrink 7.3%**, the second wave has crushed all-round demand and consumer confidence. The RBI's May round of the consumer confidence survey shows the Current Situation Index at a new all-time low, with 75% of households perceiving the economic and

employment situations as having worsened further, and the future expectations index reflecting overall pessimism. It is hard to see the mere availability of low-cost credit helping revive the all-important consumption demand.

The MPC acknowledged the bleak outlook when it slashed its projection for Q1 growth by as much as 770 basis points to 18.5%, from the 26.2% it had forecast just on April 7. Banking more on optimism than hard data, the panel bumped up its growth estimates for the second half resulting in an overall cut of only one percentage point to its full-year growth forecast at 9.5%. For this, it has assumed rural demand will remain buoyant on the back of an expected normal monsoon, while noting that widespread infections in rural areas, which likely led to a sequential decline in tractor and two-wheeler sales in April, could undermine future demand. The other factor the RBI is banking on to provide a fillip to economic activity is an accelerated pace of vaccinations, over which it has virtually no control. To be fair, Governor Shaktikanta Das has used the bank's liquidity spigot as a tool to address some of the economic distress. A series of measures focus on bolstering credit flow to the hardest hit MSME and contact-intensive industrial and services sectors, respectively. Still, the MPC can ill-afford to drop the ball on its primary remit — ensuring inflation remains anchored. With international commodity prices, including crude oil, on an upward trajectory and no signs of domestic policy support to check skyrocketing petrol and diesel pump prices, inflation is sure to accelerate, posing a major conundrum to the RBI. Raising rates could risk hurting recovery, and not doing so could heighten inflation.

Third wave threat



Various States have started the process of easing lockdowns. But they must not let down their vigil - PTI

The planning should start for the next wave, including a strategy for paediatric treatment

The country faces a dilemma today: how to open up an economy laid low by the second wave of Covid without triggering another nasty round of infections and casualties. India's active caseload has fallen below 15 lakh for the first time in over 50 days, prompting some States to gradually unlock their economies. Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat have eased their lockdown rules. Maharashtra's five-level unlock plan is based on the positivity rate and oxygen bed occupancy level in each district. Districts/municipalities with a positivity rate of 5 per cent and an oxygen bed occupancy level of below 25 per cent can open up fully. For others, restrictions will operate, in a graded way, in terms of timings of shops and the permissible capacity in malls and offices. While a calibrated, decentralised approach seems to be the best way forward to keep the economy going amidst a pandemic, it requires reliable data collection at a grassroots level. The moot issue here is to ensure comprehensive testing to arrive at a correct assessment of positivity rates across districts. Tamil Nadu has eased curbs in 27 districts and Uttar Pradesh in all except a handful of districts. India's daily testing levels, at 20 lakh, are not adequate to manage a careful opening of the economy. The Centre and States should use the ebbing second wave to ramp up testing, hospital facilities for children who are feared to be the next targets of the virus and, most importantly, vaccinations to reduce the severity of infections and ensure that the virus gets fewer chances to mutate. While it will take a couple of months for vaccine supplies to pick up, the interim period should be used to counter social hesitancy over vaccination and even testing.

The severity of any third wave would depend on the numbers untouched by the second wave and the possibility of new mutations breaching immune systems. Experts have noted that in any event vaccinations will curb severity and incidence. However, a real worry here is whether it will impact children hard. It is just as well that some States have set up a paediatric task force. Covid facilities in hospitals will have to be revamped to cater to children. This includes re-sizing oxygen masks and doing away with the concept of isolation ward. The need to vaccinate the young adult population has become more important than ever, as vaccines for children are still in the pipeline. Oxygen supplies should be prepared for a peak daily demand of liquid oxygen of over 9,000 tonnes per day, as in end-April.

The ICMR should draw up a treatment protocol that can be used where paediatricians are not available. The black fungus fiasco should not recur. In short, the government should start planning its strategy now for the next wave. It would be tragic if lessons from mistakes of the second wave — in terms of data gathering, preparation and treatment methods — are not learnt.