

Opposition criticises RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat for his comments at World Hindu Congress

Agency
New Delhi, Sept 9,

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat's comments pitching for the unity of Hindus at a speech at the World Hindu Congress in United States' Chicago drew the ire of the Opposition, PTI reported.

The Hindutva group's leader urged Hindus to unite and work together for the development of the society. He said Hindus had no aspiration for world dominance. "If a lion is alone, wild dogs can invade and destroy the lion. We must not forget that," Bhagwat said on Friday. "We want to make the world better. We have no aspiration of dominance. Our influence is not a result of conquest or colonisation." The event in Chicago commemorated the 125th

anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's historic speech at the Parliament of the World's Religions in the United States city in 1893.

Congress leader Sachin Sawant said the RSS is known for its hatred towards other castes and religions. "It is shameful of the RSS chief to describe any religion in this way," PTI quoted Sawant as saying. The Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party in Maharashtra said the RSS's ideology was anti-Hindu. "The ideology of RSS and BJP is anti-Hindu and they only know how to do caste politics," Nationalist Congress Party spokesperson Nawab Malik said. "The day they stop dividing Hindus on the basis of caste, every Hindu and people from other religions as well will be lions." All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen chief Asaduddin

Owaisi said the RSS was demeaning others with the comparison. "The RSS is trying to demean people by calling others dogs and assuming themselves as the tiger," Owaisi said. "This has been the language of RSS for the last 90 years and the people will reject such crass and crude language." Dalit leader Prakash Ambedkar claimed that Bhagwat was referring to Opposition parties when he used the word dogs and condemned it. "I condemn this mansikta [mentality] of Mohan Bhagwat that he has referred to Opposition parties in the country as dogs," Ambedkar said, according to PTI. Bharatiya Janata Party General Secretary Ram Madhav defended Bhagwat's statement saying that the RSS chief was speaking for the welfare of Hindu society and India.

A shot in the arm for Manipur's intrepid women

By- Iboiyama Laithangbam
(Courtesy: The Hindu)

September 8 was the grim anniversary of the imposition of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958, (AFSPA) in Manipur in 1980. Allegations of extra-judicial excesses and killings by security forces have persisted since then.

The Supreme Court, which is hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) petition, seeking a probe into as many as 1,528 cases of extra-judicial killings that allegedly took place in Manipur between 1979 to 2012 under the contentious Act, on July 14, 2017, constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) under the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), and ordered the framing of chargesheets in a time-bound manner against Army and police officers involved in the encounters.

Quest for truth

Renu Takhellambam, president, Extra-Judicial Execution Victim Families Association Manipur (EEVFAM), told *The Hindu*, "We joined hands to find out the truth about the deaths of our husbands, brothers and fathers. The Supreme Court's direction to the CBI to file chargesheets in the deaths of most of the 1,528 persons has vindicated us." Wives of men who died in alleged extra-judicial violence formed the EEVFAM on July 11, 2009.

Ms. Takhellambam recounted, "On that fateful morning of April 7, 2007, my husband, Mung Hangzo, was proceeding towards Imphal in a scooter with two friends. On seeing a police team, a common sight in those days in insurgency-afflicted Manipur, which caused fear of harassment and delays, they swerved to take a detour through a village road."

Eyewitness accounts said the police team chasing the scooter overtook them. "This was not far from where we lived. I heard the gunshots. The police later said in the FIR that my husband and his two friends hurled a hand grenade at the police party. But nobody heard a grenade blast. They didn't find it [the grenade] also. This is just one of the cases of fake encounters now pending before the Supreme Court," she said.

Her only child, a son, was 11 months old at the time. Today, he is a brilliant student in Class 7, and takes a keen interest in sports. "Mercifully, he does not ask much about his father now," Ms. Takhellambam said.

'More cases exist'

Babloo Loitongbam, executive director of the NGO Human Rights Alert (HRA), said, "We have reason to fear that at least 200 more cases of custodial killings exist." The HRA published



'Manipur in the Shadow of AFSPA', a 275-page report documenting extra-judicial killings in the State, in 2010. Eight skeletons were found in the heart of Imphal city by construction workers digging pits in December 2014. State and Central forces had camped at this spot in the recent past at the time. The Okram Ibobi-led State government had said the case would be handed over to the CBI or the National Investigation Agency (NIA), but this did not happen. Some of the victims may have been women, since ear-rings and ornaments were found with the skeletons.

A police whistle-blower, T. Herojit, has stated publicly that he had killed about 150 persons "on orders from the higher-ups." More recently, Lieutenant Colonel Dharamvir Singh of 3 Corps Intelligence Unit, in his July 2018 affidavit to the Manipur High Court, stated that five alleged Manipuri militants had been killed in fake encounters.

Living in penury

Edina Yaikhom, general secretary, EEVFAM, said, "Almost all widows are living in unspeakable poverty in far-flung areas. Most of the slain men were sole breadwinners. The widows are not even able to send children to schools. Many of them are eking out a living by selling a basket or two of vegetables, or as unskilled daily wage labourers."

She said: "We have heard of widow pension of ₹ 200 each per month and some other benefits, but widows have been unable to get any benefits because the forms are not given to us on various pretexts. We have been branded as widows of terrorists who took up arms against the country."

Several widows allege that they were urged to withdraw court cases in return for employment and monetary settlements. Salina Memcha, a middle-aged Muslim widow, said at a public meeting in June, "I refused their

proposal. Then, one night, security personnel raided my house. They found nothing though they ransacked it for hours. It was a threat. I hope the CBI files the chargesheet quickly." She alleged that her husband, Mohammad Faziruddin, while having dinner at their home in Kwata in the Bishnupur district on January 21, 2010, was dragged out, "tortured for a long time", and shot dead in an encounter killing.

Harrowing tale

Many such accounts are shared. Ms. Yaikhom alleged, "On the morning of January 21, 2009, my husband, Anand Ningthoujam, left home. He did not call for a long time, which was not his habit, so I was worried. That night, there was a report in the media that three insurgents of the Kanglei Yawol Konna Lup had been gunned down in an encounter at Makhon village in Senapati district by personnel of the 16 Assam Rifles and the Imphal West District police. Officials claimed to have recovered one Chinese hand grenade and one AK47 rifle from the bodies."

She added, "However, there were protests since my husband was innocent and had no link with any insurgency group. We refused to claim the body. We submitted a memorandum to Chief Minister Okram Ibobi with copies to other authorities. For four days, my husband's body remained unclaimed."

Then, Ms. Yaikhom said, "Our MLA, N. Bijoy, approached me with the appeal to perform the last rites since the body was in a mortuary. He also promised to unearth the truth and arrange for a government job for me. My family and other locals eventually claimed my husband's body for cremation. It was the last time we heard from the MLA."

The Yaikhoms' son and daughter, now in Classes 9 and 8 respectively, were aged 5 and 3 when they lost their

father. "Initially, they used to ask me frequently when their father would return. They used to point their fingers at me [imitating a policeman pointing a gun], saying they would take revenge," their mother recalls in a choked voice. "I am glad now that the image of their father has faded [from their minds], and they have come to terms [with his death]."

Some widows and bereaved families received monetary solatium on the orders of the High Court and the Supreme Court for the "mental torture" they had undergone. But no official has been arrested so far.

Led by women

The investigation led by the Supreme Court is a credit to the intrepid women of Manipur, who revolted against the colonial British government's injustices in 1904 and 1939, and took up cudgels again to check the Army's excesses.

At the start of this movement for justice, they confronted an Army column at Maibam Leikai in Imphal on December 29, 1980, and 'rescued' Ibomcha Lourembam, an alleged victim of custodial torture; the charge on which he was arrested was not made known.

No immunity

In a far-reaching 85-page July 2016 judgment that set a judicial precedent, a Bench of Justices Madan B. Lokur and U.U. Lalit ripped open the cloak of immunity provided by the AFSPA, declaring that "there is no concept of absolute immunity from trial by a criminal court" if an Army man committed an offence.

On July 2, 2018, the Supreme Court urged the National Human Rights Commission to be "actively involved" in the ongoing probe. The alleged extra-judicial killings and fake encounters by the Army, the Assam Rifles personnel and the police in Manipur "cannot be tolerated", the Supreme Court said.

For the first time in India, Catholic nuns protest 'sexploitation'

Agency
Kochi, Sept 9,

For the first time in the Catholic church's history in Kerala, a group of nuns defied their vows to come out in protest against church authorities and police for attempts to hush up the alleged rape of a nun by Bishop Franco Mulakkal of Jalandhar. They sat for over three hours on Saturday near the inspector general's office in Kochi, demanding Mulakkal's immediate arrest. The protests, organised by the Joint Christian Council, an apex body of independent Christian organisations, included seven nuns, five of them from Missionaries of Jesus congregation to which

the rape survivor belongs.

'We reported to Rome but they haven't responded'

Bishop Mulakkal, who is from Thrissur, had allegedly abused the nun several times between 2014 and 2016 at St Francis Mission Home and Convent near Kottayam, where she is based. The bishop and the nun had worked together in the Jalandhar diocese.

The rape survivor had first filed a police complaint on July 27. "The church has not given us justice. Neither have police or the government. We will fight. It was the church which forced us onto the streets," said Sr Anupama MJ, one of the protesters. The nuns also revealed they are facing threats and that church authorities initially tried to bribe them into

silence. "When we reported it to the nuncio they didn't even send an acknowledgement. We also reported directly to Rome but even they haven't responded," she said.

Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council spokesperson Father Varghese Vallikkatt said, "If there is any truth in the allegations, there are enough forums within the church to raise complaints."

The survivor's brother said, "There is a lot of evidence — doctors' certificates, statements of the bishop's driver, logbooks at the Kuruvilangad convent which disprove his alibi etc. Police are not arresting him because of pressure from the top," he alleged.

ਲੇਮੈਂਬਾ ਨੇਸਿੰਗ ਠਾਬੁਮ
LAMYANBA IRABOT NINGSING THABUM
1st Sept. to 30th Sept. 2018
Lamyamba Irabot-ki Liklam-na Yaifare
Manaba Khunnai Semlasi

LAMYANBA
IRABOT

Manipuri Proletariat Peoples Democratic Union - MPPDU
Socialist Students Union of Manipur - SSUM
Proletarian Feminist Movement, Manipur - PoFM
Socialist Women Association - SWA Manipur

MPPDU ਨੇਮੈਂਬਾ ਨੇਸਿੰਗ ਠਾਬੁਮ SSUM ਮਾਨਾਬਾ ਖੁਨਨਾਈ ਸੇਮਲਾਸੀ

Maharani Preet Kaur graced Aryans Function

Correspondent
Imphal, Sept. 9,

Maharani Preet Kaur, Ex Minister for State graced "Zaika- The Great Indian Feast" of Aryans Group of Colleges, Near Rajpura on the theme "Eat Healthy & Say No to Drugs". Dr. Anshu Kataria, Chairman, Aryans Group presided over the function.

The function was organized by Aryans Group of

Colleges, Co-Linkers and BYE. Sh. Ashwani Sekhri, Chairman, JAC; Young leader, Sh. Gagandeep Singh; Sh. K.K Sharma, Chairman, PRTC; Sh. Sanjeev Sharma, Mayor; S. Kumar Amit, D.C Patiala; S.S.P S. Mandeep Singh Sidhu; Sh. Yoginder Singh Yogi, Senior Deputy Mayor; Sh. Vinty Sangar, Deputy Mayor; Sh. Rajesh Mandora, Chairman OBC Cel MC, Patiala; SP Keshar Singh etc were also present

on the occasion. Maharani appreciated the initiative of Aryans to make Punjab Drug Free by spreading the awareness among the youth through such programmes and encouraging them to eat healthy food to redirect the mind of youth of Punjab towards healthy cause. On the occasion various renowned singers including Bannet Dosanjh, Monty & Waris, Akaal, Manpreet

Singh, Simar Gill etc performed live on their hit tracks and made the audience tap on their feet. Thousands of youth and other people took oath on the occasion against the drugs. The event was also supported by Florid, LM Thapar School of Management, Parry Grover, Club DJ, Vishal Estates, Riwarz, Zebronics, The Shaurya, Firangi Pani, Amar Hospital etc.