The International edition of the paper ‘New York Times’ stopped publishing cartoons as the one on Netanyahu became controversial. – News

The Global Forum of Theological Educators (GFTE) met from 20 to 24 May 2019, at the Orthodox Academy of Crete, in Kolympari, Crete, Greece, for its second meeting. The theme was Vision and Viability in Contexts: Theological Learning and Formation.

The inaugural meeting of the GFTE was held at Familienterfenstette Dorf, in in Schmitten, Germany, from 16 to 20 May 2016, with 86 participants from 37 countries representing six different ecclesial families: Evangelical, Protestant, Independent Churches (Africa and China), Orthodox, Pentecostal, and Roman Catholic.

This year’s forum gathered 64 participants from 29 countries, from the Pentecostal, and Roman Catholic. (Africa and China), Orthodox, Protestant, Independent Churches different ecclesial families: Evangelical, from 37 countries representing six different ecclesial families: Evangelical, Protestant, Independent Churches (Africa and China), Orthodox, Pentecostal, and Roman Catholic.

The Global Forum of Theological Educators (GFTE) was designed to provide both a context and an opportunity for theological educators from diverse Christian traditions worldwide to meet and learn together through koinonia from those engaged in similar work but whose faith traditions might be different from their own.

The central part of the GFTE process included intentionally structured time for informal conversations throughout the conference, including those that happened over leisurely meals; while participants "toured" the facilities of the Orthodox Academy which has a large library with both digital and online collections, an iconography program, a museum of Cretan herbs and botanical garden, artwork throughout its campus, and three historic chapels including the Abba Makarios Chapel, as well as the nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery with nearby 9th century Gonia Monastery.
False statistics for sheer propaganda!

Statistics, information in terms of numbers, have been used for ascertaining the social and economic status of countries and societies and for making policies for socio-economic development. It is a fact that statistical figures calculated by different agencies suffer from deficiencies owing to the methodology used by them in the collection and compilation of the data. Until recently, only very few people dared to raise serious doubts about their correctness. As statistical figures on the performance of the economy and society in the past were manipulated by the government in order to show that the path prepared by the UPA was effectively and strategically their policy. But, during the last two decades, statistics have been used as a tool for propaganda by the government to advertise its performance. Therefore, recently, people have started raising doubts about the compilation of statistical figures. The report about the government’s instruction not to publish the findings of the Periodic Labour Force Survey, and the resignation of the Chairperson and another officer of the National Statistical Commission as a mark of protest to that, early this year, strengthened the suspicion about the government’s intervention in the calculation and publication of statistical data. The order of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on 23 May, the day the election results were announced, merging the Central Statistical Office (CSO) and the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) to form the National Statistical Office (NSO), under the administrative jurisdiction of the Ministry, further intensifies doubts about the motive of the government in taking away the autonomy of this institution.

In this background, the findings in a study by Dr. Arvind Subramanian, Professor at the Harvard University, who has been engaged in the study on the calculation of GDP, raise alarm bells. According to this study, the actual GDP growth in India between 2011 and 2017 was only around 4.5% per year, and not 7% as claimed by the UPA and NDA governments. According to Dr. Subramanian, policy formulations based on these faulty figures would affect future growth of the economy. To avoid problems due to this fault, he suggested special efforts to restore growth to a higher level, to improve the quality and integrity of the data in India; and to restore India’s reputation by rectifying the damage.

It should be noted that the study is done by a reputed economist who served as the Chief Economic Adviser of Narendra Modi Government from October 2014 to June 2018. As the findings are related to the periods of 3 years each of the of the UPA and the NDA governments, the NDA alone is not to be blamed for making mistakes in the calculation of the GDP. The misuse of statistics as a tool for the propaganda of the government to win elections by misleading the people, is highly disturbing. The situation when the media compete with one another to lure the government to receive all possible favours, justifying the intervention of the government to destroy the autonomy of the Statistical Agencies, is a big threat to democracy. Destroying the autonomy of the Statistical Agencies is for creating lies about the performance of the government. The effort to build the political economy on the basis of such lies is clearly a fascist strategy adopted by Hitler on the advice of Goebbels, his propaganda minister. The NDA is using more effectively and strategically this path prepared by the UPA.

The government should authorize autonomous institutions in the country to prepare the vital statistics.
The Story of the Daughters of Zelophehad:

Women and property inheritance in the Hebrew Bible

Verses 3 & 4 of the narrative underscore the now characteristic boldness of the five women who do not merely stand their ground but presumably without prompting go on to address

not only Moses and the leadership but the whole assembly.

We should notice that they do NOT make an appeal to the sympathy of their hearers by pleading personal destitution (i.e. by telling a 'sob story' and hoping for the best). Rather, they appeal to both history and law, demonstrating that they know their history and the law and do so to good effect.

The Ambition

or the Aspiration?

What is required of the Churches, Centres and Civil Societies is to be watchful, to identify excesses and bring them before the law to protect the rights of the people.

May God, the Holy Spirit, empower us to implement the Kingdom Values in the Nazareth Manifesto.

Do not request a change in the law, but presumably without prompting go on to address not only Moses and the leadership but the whole assembly.

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A timely question to all in the task of transformation of the society would be: Are you ready with the new agenda for the good of our nation for the team?

Does not the context require more of conceptualizing, strategizing and, action at grass roots level for the next 5 years, instead of conceptualizing and passing on the baton to the 'Christian Communities' down the line for further action?

Perhaps, we need a revision of 'Nomenclature' of our units from 'Conference Centres/ Venues' to a more pragmatic Action Centres (PAC)

Sometimes, people reveal their mind. Sometimes, 'Mind Reading' is required.

Mr. Modi has given to the nation a guiding principle and

calls it 'NARA'. Though the alphabets point to his own name, he spells out his principle as: 'National Agenda and Regional Aspiration'.

Mind reading will interpret it as: 'Go, Go and So, So!' For the Centre, it is 'Go, Go'. For the States it is 'So, So' (or 'So What'?)

Where is the accent?

Which is the priority?

Is the pretext for ambition, to prevail over aspirations?

Will regional autonomy be upheld?

Will the voter's 'Will' be implemented?

The Rt. Rev. Dr. D. Pothirajulu is a former Deputy Moderator of the Church of South India and a former Director of Association of Christian Institutes for Social Concerns in Asia (ACISA)
Keep it clean
Duleep De Chickera

Real stories—real racism
A Colombo taxi driver intervened to save a customer who he suspected was a Muslim. It sounded like an apology. His two previous hires had been cancelled after this cultural identity had been gleaned.

In the hill-country, a group of persons got into a heated argument with a woman who had accompanied her daughter to an interview. One of them called the police and the woman was taken in for questioning. It had nothing to do with the petty quarrel. She had a scarf draped over her head.

In the deep-south a Muslim family was asked to leave a private bus. The conductor was barely out of his teens. None of the other passengers moved.

The difference it would have made to the humiliated family between two transport providers.

In several places around the country an unofficial boycott of Muslim shops and businesses is in place. This gets worse when Muslim shops are vandalised or burnt down by their own as a result of a month’s conflict.

This shameful trend took a painful turn in an act of self-infication at Kekirawa. The destruction of a mosque by some Muslims was a desperate attempt at survival. The ‘perceived enemy’ seemed to be pointing at the ‘real enemy’ so that social anger would be directed elsewhere. The act nevertheless amounted to a criminal breach of peace. No matter the cheering squads, those who picked up sledge hammers and took the law into their own hands should be prosecuted.

Any credible evidence of sedition being planned or formulated at the demolished mosques should have been passed on to state authorities. Intra-Muslim violence brings neither credit nor credibility to anyone. It only underlines what it expects to stop. Already judged by their own, the ‘enemy Muslims’ have overnight become traitors.

These real stories are about an intrinsic part of the Sri Lankan fabric responded to before our very eyes. The speed with which this brazen violation of human rights and intimidation and intimidation has spread is shocking. That it happens while those tasked to ensure order and national integration do little to stop it, is outrageous.

Tragedy and obligations
The horrific Easter Sunday bombings spread shock, fear and anger and can never be forgotten. For Christians, remembrance is at the heart of public worship. In fact when the public remembrance of the dead was denied to the Tamil community for decades, Christians in all parts of the country remembered the dead with thanksgiving, as they remembered the death and resurrection of Christ with thanksgiving. However, the difference Easter 2019 will make to future celebrations is that it will correctly extend Good Friday into the realm of hope, affirming that human suffering and human awakening may not be separated.

Failed governance
But in reality this will not happen. Our legislators will not contest the rising animosity against Muslims. Their behaviors in parliament, on the streets and before the cameras, say it all. Consequently, most public officials will not dare to be different. The prospect of a politically marginalized Muslim, or isolation in the face of a trumped-up inquiry, undermines accountability to the core and permits the country to divide and rule itself. The system, meant to work as a whole, cannot work for long, if it works in parts. The body disintegrates when the head becomes dysfunctional.

The craving for political power and prominence, coupled with a death of conscience, best explains this unwillingness. This is why the president, prime minister, leader of the opposition and all other legislators have not stood together against racism and the prosecution of racists, and this is why they have not collectively affirmed the Muslim community as law abiding citizens. These are unconditional obligations of any democratic leadership, so admirably demonstrated by Jacinda Ardern, the PM of New Zealand.

Standing for the protection, rights and dignity of a smaller community of citizens in times of communal unrest has seldom been a characteristic of persons at the helm of governance in this country. To the contrary, minorities have been treated as dispensable and repeatedly disowned.

A glaring example of this practice is the recent release of one with an accumulated record of hatred and aggression against the Muslim community. That this was done at the height of anti-Muslim prejudice, by the highest in the land, indicates the depth to which sectarianism is entrenched in our structures. The word used was pardon. Contempt, poured this way on a Muslim leader, so admirably engaged, can only bring contempt on the office authorized to pardon.

A state of Anomie
The aftermath of the Easter Sunday bombings confirmed what has been observed for some time. Long before the tragedy, the country was sliding into a state of anomie: a term the 19th-century French Sociologist, Emile Durkheim, coined to describe the chronic absence of norms. It was this hollow state of affairs that was exploited by extremists to legitimize anti-Muslim animosity, after the Easter Sunday bombings.

As governments have changed over the years, one hard fact has remained constant. Those endowed with responsibility to protect, have lost the integrity, wisdom and courage to be equally fair by all citizens. When this gift is lost, the ability to govern is undermined.

Lessons from school boys
Last Saturday, school-boys played a fine game of rugby in Kandy. One team was led by a smart and unassuming Muslim boy. Other than his name, nothing during the game reflected the current malaise on our streets. His team, the other team, the referee, the spectators and the commentators, they all ‘played the game.’ Back slaps and hugs after the game indicated that no team had lost.

These thirty plus young sportsmen—led by the president, PM, leader of the opposition and all other legislators, a lesson they can still learn. It is certainly possible to playhard and fast, amidst shifting advantages and reversals, and yet keep it clean and fair.

With peace and blessings to all.

Global Forum of Theological Educators
Theological Learning and Formation: Vision and Viability in Contexts

The following seven observations of the Listenting Group seem to provide an agenda, if not a direction—and therefore a promise—for the future of theological education worldwide:

- our Bible reading is inevitably confused.
- we must be dreamers, we are changed by the people we meet on the road.
- hospitality is arguably the defining quality of GFTE.
- our capacity for empathy... indeed, for shared journeying...is best enhanced by narrative...by the sharing of our stories.
- theological education is best understood as an enterprise on the move, and
- we didn’t learn new truths. We re-learned old truths in community.

Christ is risen!
- Reported by Lester Edwin J. Ruit,
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The Rt. Rev. Dr. Duleep De Chickera
is former Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Sri Lanka
When it comes to Regulatory Structures and Mechanisms, the draft is more in favour of centralisation of governance in education and recommends Common Regulatory Regime. The draft acknowledges the special needs of the marginalised sections (poor, SC, ST, OBC, minorities, persons with disability), but does not offer concrete steps in terms of affirmative action by the state and leave the agenda of educational investment to philanthropic institutions.

Critical Reflections on DNEP–2019:

The DNEP echoes the prevalent view that public spending on education in developing countries should be reallocated from higher to lower levels of education, backed by massive budgetary allocation for universalisation of primary education. There may be a case for maintaining and even increasing spending on higher education, as long as public funds can be directed to research and other public good functions of institutions of higher education. Current measures of social returns to primary, secondary and higher education do not reflect unmeasured social benefits at each level; since we do not know the relative size of these benefits across levels. We do not know the true ranking of social returns across primary, secondary and higher education. The true social rate of return to certain components of higher education, such as research and postgraduate training in science and technology, and creation of other skills where social returns probably exceed private returns (such as public administration) is probably high, and in some settings, may be as high or higher than the social rate of return to primary and secondary education. Moreover, achieving and sustaining adequate levels of quality to train public servants will involve costs, leading to greater public funding, which is probably high, and in some cases, such as public administration.

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The Knowledge Economy Framework focuses on four pillars to support a successful knowledge economy.

The first pillar of the framework is an economic and institutional regime that is conducive to the creation, diffusion, and utilization of knowledge. A regime that provides incentives which encourage the use and allocation of existing and new knowledge efficiently will help to foster productive economic activity. The economic environment must have good policies and be open to free trade and foreign direct investment. The government should protect property rights to encourage entrepreneurship and knowledge production.

The second pillar is a well-educated and skilled population that can develop a knowledge economy and sustain long-term economic growth. A more educated society tends to be more technologically sophisticated, generating higher demand for knowledge.

The third pillar is a dynamic information infrastructure that facilitates the communication, dissemination, and processing of information and technology. The development of knowledge and information worldwide reduces transactions costs for firms, opening up possibilities for communication, productivity and output.

The final pillar is an efficient innovation system of firms, research centres, universities, think-tanks, consultants, and other organisations, that applies and adapts global knowledge to local needs to create new technology. The generation of technical knowledge leads to productivity growth.

The Knowledge Economy Framework suggests that the effective knowledge economies in which knowledge is created, disseminated, and used well, have four pillars in place.

Policy advice would focus attention on which of the pillars is in particular need, in terms of appropriate policies, institutions, investments and coordination so that combination develops a knowledge economy and sustain long-term economic growth.
Meditation
Joy of Living

M. J. Joseph

Remembering the imperative of Christian discipleship, one should explore the cardinal principles of Christian calling. “Called by God” and “sent by Christ” as “God’s co-worker” (1 Cor. 3:9) and “apostle of Christ”, is the foundation stone of one’s ministerial calling. In essence, the world is to be regarded as a celebrated God’s involvement in human affairs by singing the Christian hymn, “O God, children of the world! The Lord is our home!”

The heavenly host expressed the divine joy on the birth of Jesus, the Saviour, singing, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased”. As God’s fellow workers and servants of Christ, we are called upon to continue the divine joy of mission as the gospel imperative of Jesus; “Go and preach; “Go and heal” and “Go and teach” (Max Warren). To give light to those who sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and to those who have no peace” (LK 1:79) is indeed an existing business. As Helen Keller puts it, “it is most exciting when it is lived for others”. Therefore, the joy in commitment is to be generated and shared through words of humility, compassion, justice concern and action as the know-how of the Kingdom of God which Jesus preached. “Serving one another in love” and “forgiving one another” are compulsions from above, for common good.” Be good, get good, and do good (C.H. Spurgeon) which alone will generate joy in our commitment. “The best portion of a good man’s life - his little, nameless unremembered acts of kindness and love” (William Wordsworth).

Statelessness and Human Trafficking

The Rev. Dr. M. J. Joseph is former Principal of Max Thomson Theological Seminary, Kottayam, and former Director of Ecumenical Christian Institute, Bangalore.

Statelessness is a severe human rights violation that affects millions of people worldwide. It is a state of being without a nationality or legal identity, often leading to social exclusion, vulnerability to exploitation, and violation of fundamental human rights. Individuals who are stateless are denied basic rights, including the right to education, health care, and social security. They are often unable to access official documents, travel, or work in their own countries, leading to poverty and marginalization.

Statelessness and human trafficking are closely linked. Traffickers often exploit stateless individuals, who due to their legal status, are vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, and trafficking. These individuals are often denied access to education, healthcare, and other basic necessities, making them more susceptible to trafficking.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that there are at least 10 million stateless people globally, with the majority of them being concentrated in the Asia-Pacific region. These individuals do not have legal protection and are at risk of being exploited and trafficked.

Stateless people are also at higher risk of being trafficked due to their lack of legal status and social cohesion. The absence of legal rights and protections leaves them vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation.

The United Nations and various international organizations have called for a global response to address statelessness, including the adoption of the Global Compact on Migration in 2018, which aims to address the needs of stateless individuals and prevent their trafficking.

In conclusion, statelessness is a fundamental human rights violation that affects millions of people worldwide. Addressing statelessness is crucial in preventing human trafficking and ensuring the protection of vulnerable populations. By providing legal status and supporting basic human rights, we can combat statelessness and reduce the risk of human trafficking.

References:
It is very critically important to reflect deeply on how the Risen Master encountered his beloved disciples whom he had sent, as the Father had sent him. John 20:21, but, so sadly, who had gone for ‘fishing’. Humanly thinking, it would be terribly disturbing: the Risen Master even after personally meeting them, and interacting with them, and sending them to continue, the mission they had been entrusted with, seven of them went back to their old life, the life of fishing. It should be, definitely, noteworthy for us how the Risen Master responded to such a situation of statelessness, in which the doors were being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Father. Many memories, clearly the rejection of the paths/ways of the world, when their Master began his public ministry, clearly manifesting the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the Father’s approval of the way he chose.

Lake 3:32, the first thing that he did was the unequivocal rejection, by overcoming the three temptations, of the paths/ways of miracles, comfort and wealth, and power. Matt 4:3-11. In other words, though he began his ministry declaring, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand”, Mark 1:14, he also categorically said that his way would not be the way of miracles, of power etc.

The way for the Good News to the poor

In Nazareth, in the synagogue, he read from the book of Isaiah. “The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the captive, and releasing of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” and said, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing”. Luke 4:18-20. Unhesitatingly he announced that his ministry was bringing good news to the poor, giving release to the captives, liberating the oppressed etc. But he also made it public that his way was not of shallow prosperity, ease and comfort, force and power. Without leaving any element of doubt

Only three more incidents of the life of the Master are pointed out. Jesus told the man who wanted to follow him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head”. Luke 9:57,58 (RSV). To all the disciples, to all those who wanted to follow him, Jesus, very clearly, said that his way was not a way of prosperity and comfort, wealth and possessions. And that his way was the way of the cross. On another occasion Jesus very bluntly said, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me...”. Mark 8:34,35. He made it quite clear that only those who were willing to take up their cross, could follow him. And that cross, was not the way of easy, comfortable, safe self-aggrandizement. In fact, when Simon Peter drew out the sword and struck the high priest’s slave and cut off his right ear, Jesus powerfully told him, one of his chief disciples, “Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me? John 18:11. Leaving not even an element of doubt. Jesus was saying to Peter and his other disciples that his way was not the way of the sword, of force, power and politics out of any cross.

They were sent along the path chosen by the Father for their Master. Having fully proved with his life that he absolutely fulfilled the Father’s plan for him and fully journeyed through the way of the cross, and having proved to the disciples the approval of the Father with his resurrection, the Risen Master told them, “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you”. So it became quite clear to them that they were to be sent along the path of the Cross.

A ‘Human Rights’ Concern

Statelessness and Human Trafficking

forced marriages in women-deficit areas due to female infanticide. The forced children are subjected to physical and sexual abuse and treated as slaves. In many cases, trafficked children and women are at risk of all manner of ills, from unwanted pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, cervical cancer, severe physical injury, violence, drug abuse and more, not to mention the emotional trauma and long-run psychological impact.

The human trafficking is omnipresent and is considered as a complex problem in any society. States, no matter powerful or weak, only partially address the issue by using the legal and administrative mechanisms. The implementation of effective legislation and policies by governments is necessary to address the situation.

The issue of statelessness must be addressed in a comprehensive manner. The four dimensional actions based on Identification, Prevention, Repatriation and Protection are necessary for the elimination of statelessness.

Churches need to take an active role in the promotion of human rights for justice and peace, in solidarity and in an ecumenical context. They must counter statelessness and combating human trafficking. The churches can help to register stateless people for identity cards and solve their human rights issues. It can start centres for para-legal work to help stateless people. Churches should provide a safe place for stateless people with acceptance and solidarity. It should provide some space for the stateless, so as to improve the visibility of stateless people.

The states must confer citizenship to prevent and reduce statelessness and protect the basic human rights of citizens and stateless people. Faith communities and stateless persons should work together to remedy and to prevent, statelessness.

India’s Media Landscape

How is it changing?

2016: a petrol bomb was hurled at the house of Patricia Mukhim, the Shillong Times editor, last year. The ultimate de-legitimation of the media as an institution how to proclaim the word by the ruling establishment. During the first tenure of the NDA government led by the BJP this has been particularly true of television, with a host of channels—Zee News, India TV, Republic TV, Times Now, among others—turning openly partisan. There are enough examples of this on YouTube to prove the point.

The same five-year period which has seen the changes described above has also seen a significant rise in independent media, most of it online, several offering specialized content.

Civil society and the more thoughtful sections of the Indian regional media need to help improve the counter fake news. Do we have the laws to deal with this phenomenon? If court cases are being filed by individuals in response to attack, what becomes of them? Do they get support from the legal community and their media counterparts? More people need to simply recognize the much enlarged landscape that the media has become.
Repealed raids on Jesuit activist

An eight-member team of the Maharashtra police raided the Bhopal campus, the residence of the 83-year-old Father Stan Swamy at Namkum near Ranchi, the Jharkhand state capital. The raid that started at 7:15 am on 12 June continued for 3.5 hours.

“The raids and arrests are part of the government’s growing attempts to stifle dissent and intimidate those who are fighting for justice.” He is an exceptionally gentle, honest and public-spirited person said the Jharkhand Janadikar Mahasabha (Grand Council of people’s rights in Jharkhand).

The Maharashtra police had earlier raided the priest’s residence on August 28, 2018.

In the latest raid, the police searched the priest’s belongings and took his computer hard disk and internet modem and forced him to give his email and Facebook passwords. Thereafter, they changed his passwords and seized these accounts.

“The Jharkhand Janadikar Mahasabha condemns repeated raids on Stan Swamy and arrests of other human rights activists,” the team said.

The rights group noted that the Jesuit priest has worked for the rights of Adivasis and other underprivileged groups in Jharkhand. He has taken up cases such as displacement of the landless, rights to land resources, the condition of under-trials and Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA).

The priest, popularly known as Stan, has criticized the Jharkhand government’s attempts to amend land laws and the land acquisition act in the state. He is also a strong advocate of the Forest Rights Act, PESA and related laws.

The rights group also recalled the arrest of Surendra Gadling, Sudhir Dhawale, Mahesh Raut, Shoma Sen, and Rona Wilson on June 6, 2018 and their continued imprisonment in the Yerwada Central Jail in Pune.

“The group demanded immediate end to the raids, dropping all ‘false’ terror charges against them, scrapping all anti-terror laws, and release of those arrested. ‘These harassments are politically motivated and wholly unjustified,’ it further added.” – Mail Today, June 12’19

Congress of Asian Theologians

The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) has announced the decision to hold the Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS) – IX in Medan, Indonesia. Originally it was scheduled to be held in Sri Lanka from 5 to 10 August 2019. The venue of CATS – IX has been shifted to Medan, Indonesia. However, the original dates scheduled (from 5 to 10 August 2019) will remain unchanged.

Those who have already applied to attend the CATS-IX as per the original notification will be informed by the selection committee of the venue change. CCA will accept additional nominations registration formalities or forward their specific request for travel towards the end of April with regard to the venue and the Easter day.

Victims of Acts of Violence

The United Nations has established International Day Commemorating the Victims of Religion Persecution Victims Based on Religion or Belief. The U.N.’s General Assembly passed the resolution without objection on 4 June, setting August 22 as the day to commemorate victims of anti-religious violence.

“The world has been experiencing an unprecedented rise of violence against religious communities and people belonging to religious minorities. Any act of violence against people belonging to religious minorities cannot be accepted,” said Jacek Czaputowicz, Poland’s foreign minister, speaking before the General Assembly. Poland introduced the resolution creating the day. He cited recent “spalling acts of violence” against mosques in New Zealand and Easter Sunday bombings of churches in Sri Lanka.

When journalists are arrested on the basis of their social media posts, it is imperative to ask – what is it that such big groups of journalists are saying or posting that can prompt this degree of positive action? In her report, How India’s Media Landscape Changed Over Five Years, Scroll.in discovered the new widespread emergence of multimedia platforms leading journalists to redefine the role of the media in political, social, and the relationship between the two. Below is an abridged version of her report which appeared in The India Forum.

The five-year period of 2014-2019 has been marked by an explosion of media creation and media use in India that is the answer to the question, who is the media, has become, literally, everybody.

Many developments that contributed to this end: the explosion of internet connectivity and cheap smartphones in small town and rural India, leading to growing numbers online and on social media. With 500 million Indians on the Internet by the end of 2018 (a growth of 65% from 2018 to 2018), the acquisition of WhatsApp by Facebook in 2014 and its acquisition of Instagram in 2016 the number of mobile users in India thereby has meant that the messaging app now has over 200 million users in India. The 65% growth is partly explained by the launch of Reliance Jio in September 2016, the 4G telecom service of Reliance Industries which was free for six months. Access to media tools—a cheap smartphone with a camera, an online app on which you can edit your video — has become a marker of changing demographics.

Changing demography has also led to changing the Indian psyche where, now, if a coaching centre catches fire, passers-by now stop and shoot a video. When people lynched or rape they also shoot a video to record it.

De-legitimising mainstream media

In the five years of the Modi-I regime, party and government operated on a simple formula: delegitimise existing media and create your own channels of communication with the voter and citizen.

Narendra Modi was elected in May 2014. In June, Scroll.in reported that the Prime Minister had asked both senior bureaucrats and cabinet colleagues to refrain from speaking with journalists. When surveyed on whether the government had really clamped up (journalists) for covering government said cabinet notes and cabinet meeting agendas were no longer available, nor were inter-ministerial exchanges coming out.

Prime Minister Modi also started a monthly radio programme, ‘Mann Ki Baat’ on All India Radio, and the programme quickly began to drive stories in the press and on television.

Increased self-censorship

Over these five years, more than any time in the past, media houses in India (TV, print and online) discovered the virtues of self-censorship. Published news items disappeared from websites. TV channels dropped interviews or stories done by their correspondents.

The resignation of the ABP anchor Punya Prasun Bajpai, CenTral Roge. July 1

The view expressed in this paper are not necessarily those of the editors.