

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Destruction of Kolkata's personality

SIR, Apropos your editorial, "Taxation blues" in today's edition, in addition to the points you make, our objections to the proposed "blue-and-white tax rebate" are on the following grounds:

Under the name of beautification, this will be a step towards regimentation. Promoting one colour scheme for the entire city is similar to asking all citizens to wear a uniform. Kolkata is not a cantonment; on the contrary, we have always taken pride in the diversity in our city. North Kolkata is different from South Kolkata, every *para* has its own character, every street its own feel. Most visitors to Kolkata have praised it for its fascinating variety of street life, its many different faces. Encouraging us to paint all our buildings blue and white will destroy the essence of Kolkata's personality, its rich organic fabric.

The proposed rebate will be discriminatory. If I paint my house yellow and white, why should I not get a rebate? What logical or legal basis is there to waive tax for a blue-and-white building but not for a green-and-white one? Further, house owners who are too poor to paint their houses have to pay their full tax, while those who are well off and can afford to paint get a rebate!

The proposed rebate will also be retrograde in that it will reward cosmetics over real benefit. At a time when cities around the world are encouraging sustainable living, a tax



rebate should be given for a tangible benefit to the city, such as to buildings that put in rain water harvesting or solar energy. You will be aware that buildings, transport and power are areas that progressive cities are focusing on for reducing carbon footprint and improving sustainability. These are crite-

ria based on which we should provide incentives not the colour of the paint used.

The reference to Jaipur as a "pink city is misplaced. It was because of the easy availability of pink sandstone that buildings in Jaipur took on a common colour. It certainly was not because of a tax rebate!

PEOPLE'S CHOICE

SIR, In his article, 'Back to saffron agenda', Kuldip Nayar is unnecessarily afraid of Narendra Modi who is the Prime Minister by the choice of the people, and not by force. This is the fundamental fact that cannot be ignored. The people have voted for Mr Modi and his party in the interest of transparency of governance, which was lacking during Congress rule. The value of Article 370, as a constitutional provision to integrate the country, has to an extent declined. All states are equal in India. Even the people of J & K have voted in favour of the BJP. I have 15 friends in J & K, of whom 13 want Article 370 to be abrogated. The result is already before us; we only have to wait patiently.

*Yours, etc., Binay Laha,
Kishanganj (Bihar), 13 June.*

Similarly, talk about "blue sky" simply reflects incomplete understanding; in fact the sky is not blue, it only appears to be so because we are unable to see the entire colour spectrum.

*Yours, etc., Bonani Kakkar,
(People United for Better
Living in Calcutta), 13 June.*

JUNKET IN BRAZIL

SIR, Despite the public hue and cry, six ministers of Goa are going to Brazil to enjoy the World Cup with the support of the state's Chief Minister. The Goa government is paying for the trip. Some years ago, H.D. Deve Gowda, then the Prime Minister, took his family and friends to Harare.

The trip was sponsored by the central government. Politicians are squandering public money on these junkets, and this is harmful for democracy. What example are they setting to the people, in particular those who have elected them?

*Yours, etc., KK Mohanty,
Kolkata, 13 June.*

BEYOND CURE

SIR, This is with reference to the report, "Rape is unpreventable, says RR Patil" (12 June). The statement made by Maharashtra's home minister is horrifying - "Rape or crime against women cannot be stopped even if we post a cop per house in the state". Indirectly, Mr Patil has implied that the state is so unsafe for women that even if a cop were to be

posted at every doorstep, they would still not be safe.

If indeed the minister considers rape to be 'unpreventable', then I should imagine that the future of Maharashtra is bleak.

He hastened to add that this year's state budget has an exclusive provision to tackle crime against women. If rape cannot be prevented, what will this "exclusive provision", so-called, achieve? He has slammed the metaphorical hammer on his own foot.

*Yours, etc., Priya Agarwal,
Siliguri, 12 June.*

ROLE OF MEDIA

SIR, The role of the media is not the same as it was when Edmund Burke described it as the fourth estate. It has undergone radical changes over the centuries and hyper-commercialisation has transformed the media into a propaganda tool for business organisations and political parties.

This was all too evident during the recent Lok Sabha elections. Not that all media houses are culpable; there are several notable exceptions. The Fourth Estate, including the electronic media, is today a commodity that can be exchanged for money at will. So very different from the days when it used to be regarded as the protector of democracy.

*Yours, etc., Anil Kumar
Choudhury,
Kalyani, 12 June.*