

Is Tharoor More Sinned Against Than Sinning?

New Delhi: (IANS) Why is Shashi Tharoor, India's dapper junior foreign minister, always in trouble? His detractors might say the Twitter-happy minister is a political greenhorn and prone to indiscretion but his loyalists argue that he's being targeted because he is so obviously different from the run-of-the-mill politician.



And the latest controversy over his remarks in Riyadh last weekend about Saudi Arabia being a "valuable interlocutor" between

India and Pakistan is just an example, say aides close to the former UN diplomat and bestselling author who has almost celebrity status on the capital's social and literary circuits.

Tharoor, 53, clarified that a section of the media had "misread" his remarks. "Any other interpretation was neither meant nor warranted," he said in a statement after the uproar that he had suggested that Saudi Arabia mediate between India and Pakistan.

"There is a pattern to these attacks and obviously people do not want to see him in public life," said a close aide who did not want to be named, pointing out that some had simply confused interlocutor with mediator.

"There has been a vicious personal attack on him," he added, pointing out the numerous occasions when Tharoor's remarks were misconstrued.

"But the prime minister backs him fully," the aide told IANS.

Another senior official said the fact that Tharoor, a first time MP from Thiruvananthapuram, was articulate, high profile and had a successful career as a UN diplomat behind him, not to mention that he was the author of eight books, made him a natural target for envy. Sources close to Tharoor, who could not be named because of the sensitivity of their jobs, strongly believe that at least some media outlets have an agenda to "dig out dirt" on Tharoor to embarrass him politically.

The former UN undersecretary general, who was India's nominee for the post of UN secretary general, had said earlier that he came to India at the invitation of the Congress leadership.

The opposition Bharatiya Janata Party had a different take.

"The problem is that he (Tharoor) is still in the hangover of UN secretariat. He should understand he is a member of the council of ministers in India and should watch only one thing — interests of India," said S.S. Ahluwalia, Rajya Sabha MP.

"He may bring a new dictionary from the World Bank and UN secretariat to interpret the meaning of interlocutor. The spelling of interlocutor and mediator may be different but for the layman, it is all the same."

Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) MP P. Karunakaran also said that Tharoor should hone his political skills.

Pravin Mahajan Dies Four Years After Killing Brother

Mumbai: (IANS) Pravin Mahajan, sentenced to life imprisonment in 2007 for killing his elder brother and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Pramod Mahajan, died in a Thane hospital Wednesday evening after remaining in coma for three months, hospital authorities said. He was 50.

Pravin Mahajan was admitted to the Jupiter Hospital in Thane following a brain haemorrhage Dec 11, 2009, when he was on parole. He had been in coma since then and was put on life support system but failed to recover, a close aide of the family said.

A spokesman for the Jupiter Hospital said his condition deteriorated sharply Monday.

"His condition became critical since the past 48 hours, his blood pressure fell, kidneys stopped functioning and even his other vital systems deteriorated and failed," the spokesperson told mediapersons at the hospital.

In a dramatic murder that shocked the country, Pravin Mahajan shot his elder brother Pramod Mahajan on April 22, 2006, in his Mumbai home. The high-profile BJP leader succumbed to his bullet wounds 11 days later on May 3.

Shortly after committing the crime, Pravin walked down to the Worli police station and surrendered with his weapon.

Pravin Mahajan was sentenced to life by a sessions court for fratricide on Dec 18, 2007. He was in the Nashik Central Jail and was on parole on medical grounds when he suffered the stroke.

He was released for 14 days Nov 27, 2009, and was due to return to jail Dec 12. But around 10.30 p.m. Dec 11, he was rushed to the Jupiter Hospital following fatigue, giddiness and severe headache, later diagnosed as a massive brain haemorrhage.

He was kept under the care of a team of specialists, including a physician, neurologist, neurosurgeon and a cardiologist.

After a long battle lasting nearly 80 days, Pravin Mahajan died around 5 p.m. Wednesday.

Pravin Mahajan's family, including wife Sarangi, twins - son Kapil and daughter Vaishali - and other relatives had gathered at the hospital Wednesday.

The hospital has written to the police and

prison authorities regarding further instructions on conducting an autopsy.

"We will wait for their reply. If they want to do an autopsy, we shall do it, if they want us to

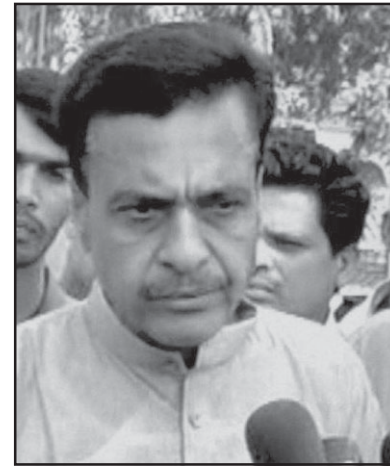
hand over the body, we shall do that accordingly," the hospital spokesperson said.

Hospital authorities added that six doctors were beside Pravin Mahajan before his death Wednesday.

"We also used to send a daily medical update on his condition to the police and other concerned authorities," the spokesperson said.

Referring to a possible dispute over the payment of medical expenses for Pravin Mahajan, the hospital said it would discuss the matter with his family or the government.

In January, Pravin Mahajan's wife Sarangi had appealed to the state government to bear the cost of her husband's stay in hospital since the family could not afford it. However, the government declined to bear the medical expenses.



Godman Linked To Sex Scandal; Ashrams Ransacked

Bangalore/Chennai: (IANS) Within hours of news channels telecasting video footage of a self-styled godman Paramhansa Nityananda allegedly indulging in sexual acts with two women, enraged mobs ransacked his ashrams in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

A mob of infuriated men attacked the sprawling 29-acre ashram in Bidadi in Karnataka, smashing the 32-year-old godman's portraits, banners, billboards and the reception office. Police deployed additional forces to protect the devotees, including about 100 foreigners staying within the complex.

"We have deployed two platoons of the state reserve police numbering about 100 men to guard the Nityananda Mission and protect the devotees, as the people from the town wanted to lay a siege," Ramanagara district police superintendent S.B. Bhisanhalli told IANS.

Bidadi is about 30 km from Bangalore.

The sensational video footage showed the godman, who originally hails from neighbouring Tamil Nadu, fondling and kissing the women and in a compromising position with them in turns.

While the video clipping shows that the man in action is Nityananda, one of the women is allegedly a Tamil actress who has played leading role in many films and TV serials.

In Tamil Nadu, members of outfits like Periyar Dravida Kazhagam, VCK and Hindu Makkal Katchi held protests in different places and demanded Nityananda's arrest.

Nityananda's banners were burnt and many centres of his shram Nityananda Dhyanapectam in the state and in Pudducherry were ransacked and damaged by protesters.

While the whereabouts of Nityananda is not known, a message posted on the ashram's website terms the video footage aired by the news channel as a mix of conspiracy, graphics and rumour and added that legal course of action is being worked out.

The Nityananda Mission is part of a worldwide movement for meditation and peace. It claims to have about 1,000 branches across 33 countries and about two million followers the

world over.

"The goal of Paramahansa Nityananda's advent on planet earth is to spread the inner science of enlightenment by delivering physical health, mental wellness and spiritual awakening to all beings irrespective of their race, gender or nationality," a mission spokesman told reporters when accosted to know the whereabouts of the godman and about the expose.

"The video footage shown by news channels was not shot here. It must have been taken in Tamil Nadu or elsewhere. Our priority is to first maintain law and order and prevent the situation going out of control," Bhisanhalli said.

Denying knowledge of the godman's sexual acts and his misconduct, the mission spokesman alleged that the video footage was fabricated and aired to defame their 'guru' as non-believers were jealous of his growing popularity.

"We feel a deep-rooted conspiracy behind the so-called expose. It is for the authorities to investigate the video footage to ascertain the truth. We know nothing about the incident," the spokesman said but declined to be named.

Lamenting that the sleaze had hurt the feelings of devotees, the spokesman said enemies of the mission hatched a conspiracy to malign and blackmail the pontiff for vested interests.

"Our guru's mission is to enlighten the people through yoga and meditation. His character is above suspicion," the spokesman asserted.



Paramhansa Nityananda

Dalai Lama Joins Twitter Community

Dharamsala: (IANS) Watch out for tweets from no less than the Dalai Lama. The spiritual head of the Tibetan Buddhist community has joined the social networking website Twitter to keep in touch with followers. "His Holiness the Dalai Lama has joined Twitter," said a post on the website of the Tibetan government-in-exile.

The Dalai Lama had fled Tibet after a failed uprising against Chinese rule in 1959 and is now based in this Indian town. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.

Around 140,000 Tibetans now live in exile, over 100,000 of them in different parts of India. Over six million Tibetans live in Tibet.