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SHIV SENA and the BOMBAY RIOTS

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Statement by

S. A. DANGE, M.P.

dated 18 February 1969

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We are circulating for the information of Members of Parliament, leaders and workers of political parties and others, the statement issued by Shri S. A. Dange on the Shiv Sena action in Bombay and the riots or "uprising" of lumpens and looters that followed on the heels of the Shiv Sena ban on the visits of Shri Y. B. Chavan and Shri Morarji Desai to the City.

We are also giving herewith an English translation of an editorial article in the Daily Maratha, Bombay, so that readers may get an indication of how quite a large section of Marathi opinion looks at the problem.

Parliamentary Office,
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SHIV SENA AND THE BOMBAY RIOTS

STATEMENT BY S. A. DANGE, M.P.

Issued at Bombay on 18 February 1969

I was not in Bombay when this incident took place. I was in Prague. I returned from there yesterday.

While in Prague, I got the news of the firing and its victims, broadcast on the radio by the BBC. I then sent a telegram expressing "my condolences to the families of those who died in the firing". And I gave it to the press.

I sent the telegram not because I considered that those, who were killed in the firing, had fallen in a revolutionary cause. What was its meaning then?

This movement which took place in Bombay was extremely complex. It is but natural that differences should arise as to what policy the democratic and communist-socialist parties should adopt towards it.

It is obvious that this movement took place under the leadership of the Shiv Sena. It was not surprising that this movement and the demand ultimately turned into an uprising of freebooters.

There are in the Shiv Sena quite a large number of discontented youths. The capitalists of Bombay together with some of the Congress leaders and their government hatched a very cunning and sinister plot to utilise the demands of these discontented young men of Bombay for their own anti-working class, anti-communist game.

"Divide the Marathi and non-Marathi workers!" "Treat the great Birla as your benefactor!" "Attack the Communists as enemies of the country!" "Consider the non-Marathi workers and shopkeepers, Udipis and Madrasis, as your enemies!", etc. — these were the main slogans raised by them.

"We will invade the homes of the communists and kill all of them!" announced Shri Bal Thackarey.

This announcement pleased the Congress and the capitalists. "What a courageous slogan has our 'Shivaji' given us", said some of his young men. Nobody raised his voice against this violent, anti-working class slogan, so pleasing to the capitalists and the American imperialists.

When our union office was burnt by the Shiv Sena in the darkness of the midnight (on 27 December 1967), nobody, neither the police nor anybody else, turned up to even make a note of that hooliganism.

But the Shiv Sena is full, not only of honest discontented Marathi young men, but also of bootleggers, professional goondas and police-agents, too. The good young men amongst them dream of building a new society, while their leaders and hoodlums want to misguide and crush people's revolutionary upsurge by putting into practice their anti-social, anti-democratic policies.

How can this be accomplished merely by holding out anti-communist threats?

That is why they gave the slogan for the launching of a movement on the issue of Belgaum and Karwar; they announced that they would not allow any minister of the Central Government to enter Bombay.

Was this slogan and this demand correct? It was quite correct.

Movements had taken place on this issue and all democratic parties had participated in them. The communists were in the forefront of these movements. If the Shiv Sena had really cared for this movement and for the Marathi people of Belgaum, why did they not seek the cooperation of all parties?

When the people of Bombay and Maharashtra fought on the democratic issue of establishing the state of Maharashtra, with Bombay as its capital, we all came together and founded the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti and used many techniques and tactics of struggle.

Why did not the leaders of the Shiv Sena follow the same course? That was because their leaders did not want to achieve the goal of unity of Maharashtra, its democratic homogeneity. They had rejected the slogan of the Samiti—"Socialist Maharashtra in a Socialist India". And the leaders of the PSP, as is

usual with them, sided with the SS. What issue did they put up? The issue before them was the defeat of the communists and not that of winning a few empty worthless seats for themselves in the elections.

Was the slogan—"No entry to the Ministers"—correct? Yes, it was correct.

Yeshwantrao Chavan had to beat a hasty retreat. Morarji did the same by driving away fast. Was this good? It was very good. The Samiti and the Communist Party had done this thing many times, during the movement for Maharashtra. In revenge, 10 martyrs were killed by the Congress Government and many of them were Communist workers, men and women, and, of course, of other parties too.

What was the sequence of events this time? That is a very important question.

The running away of Yeshwantrao Chavan was not a new phenomenon. He had betrayed Maharashtra before and had run the bi-lingual State. Many other Congress leaders have also betrayed. The Congress leaders had tried to crush with a heavy hand, the demand for uniting all the Marathi people in a unilingual State. Morarji Desai had gone still further and resorted to firing even in Gujarat and the citizens of Ahmedabad punished him for it. The Congress leaders do not want to solve the linguistic State and border problems on the basis of the Pataskar formula for fear that if the people get united in a homogenous linguistic State, the Congress power will crack and capitalism will meet its doom.

So there was nothing wrong in resorting to tactics, like stopping the ministers, etc., followed by the Shiv Sena youths.

The Congress Government moved only when Chavan and Morarji were attacked. The main object of the Shiv Sena was anti-communism, support to Birla and weaning away the citizens of Bombay from their revolutionary aim by bringing about a split between Marathi and non-Marathi workers. They had moved away from this aim and that was why the Congress leaders got so angry with them and that is how their manoeuvres began.

But the Congress leadership was divided because of their narrow selfish interest. Some of them were pleased to see

Chavan made to run away. But this was likely to jeopardise the Congress rule and so action was needed against it—and some of their elders demanded it.

Taking advantage of this situation that section of the leadership of the Shiv Sena came forward—the section whose corps consisted of freebooters, anti-social elements, hoodlums.

They started arson and loot—burning shops, breaking open houses and looting goods. Politics and demands were given a go-by. The uprising of the looters began.

In the first two days, the Congress Ministers and the police ignored them. Mr. Vasant Rao Naik, Chief Minister of the State, speaking on the radio, did not even refer to the Shiv Sena pack of goondas. Why?

For the simple reason that this demoniacal set of rulers are afraid of the people of Bombay. And hence if the people are attacked by the Huns of Attila, so much the better. Teach them a lesson. So they rejoiced in these attacks. "You used to abuse us—the Government! Well? Now reap the fruits of your abuse. Why do you cry now for our help, and the help of the police?" So saying, they looked on at the loot and arson with delight.

But, then this uprising of the looters began to slip out of their control. Shops, markets, railways, buses, now came under attack of the looters. The mutiny and the loot went beyond their calculation. Even the police, who had hitherto been in the habit of taking money from the bootleggers and capitalists and, in return, ignoring their vandalism, could not any more do so. They knew that if this thing continued unchecked, they would stand condemned in the eyes of the whole nation and all their manoeuvres come to nought; sensing it they resorted to firing, to inhuman firing.

But it was not the looters, the hoodlums who were shot. They took to their heels and escaped and young boys fell victims to police bullets. Those who had gone into it for "romantic experience" alone died. The looters escaped with their booty while onlookers met their death.

That this was nothing but an uprising of the looters is amply borne out by the fact that shops both of Marathis and non-

Marathis, became targets of attack without discrimination. The looters looted all, burnt all.

"Because Chavan and Morarji have successfully escaped, let us burn our neighbour's shops and let us ransack our neighbour's house"—said the Shiv Sena—what kind of revolutionary wrath is this? Because Shehistan, the Mughal agent, when attacked by Shivaji saved himself by running away through the window of his house in Poona, Shivaji did not turn his wrath against his own people and burn their houses in Poona. But "Shiv Sena" (the army of Shivaji) did not hesitate to loot its own people; thus it brought into action its own counter-revolutionary politics in Maharashtra in the name of Shivaji.

IN THIS MOVEMENT, ONE THING WHICH NEEDS TO BE OBSERVED PARTICULARLY IS THAT IN SPITE OF HEAVY FIRING, THE WORKING CLASS DID NOT COME OUT ON A SPONTANEOUS GENERAL STRIKE, EVEN IN MARATHI LOCALITIES, NOR DID THEY OBSERVE A HARTAL.

I CONGRATULATE THEM FOR IT.

There is a basic difference in the fundamental principles and techniques between the struggle led by the Maharashtra Samiti of the old days and this struggle of the S.S.

The Samiti, in those days, gave battle only on the basis of forging unity of all parties and people. The leaders of the S.S. initiated their slogans only on the basis of bringing about a split in the ranks of the people, inciting one section against another, collaborating with the capitalists and after securing the blessings of anti-communism from several Congress leaders. The Samiti used the hartal, the General Strike, the battle against the centres of governmental power, as its weapon of struggle. In the old days when we were arrested, no shops were looted. On the other hand, workers went on united general strikes and stopped railway trains and buses from plying. Even thousands of women participated in it. At some places, buses were burnt, no doubt, but only when they were taken out forcibly by the authorities for breaking the strike. What the Samiti led was, no doubt, an insurrection. And S. M. Joshi and myself said so

in the mammoth meeting held on the Chowpathy on 21 November 1955 but our insurrection was not directed against shopkeepers, panpattiwallas or milk centres. When the police resorted to firing, our workers attacked police stations and not gold or silver shops, Gujarati or Udipi hotels.

This is the main difference between the two uprisings: that of the Samiti's and of the looters! It is not enough to have merely a correct demand nor is it of any use to shed tears because some good young men fell victims to the bullets of the police.

That is why many people criticised this looting which was initiated by the lumpen section of the Shiv Sena. Many people who have written on this question have forgotten the goal and the technique of struggle used by the Samiti. Some have gone still further and actually showed sympathy with the S.S. How do they argue? They simply see only one thing—that the 'people are killed and the demand is just'. Well, youths of Hitler's army also put up a just demand. They said: 'Down with the Versailles Treaty!, Up with United Germany! Destroy the rich Jew capitalists!' But they talked only of Jews and not of all capitalists and the Hitler youths, beset with unemployment and beguiled by those slogans, fell victims to fascism. The capitalists in India and some leaders of the Congress are inclined to do the same and in the Shiv Sena, they have found good ally and weapon.

Let us remember that in future, whenever the Bombay workers will take the field for their own struggles, the Congress Government of Bombay and its capitalist supporters will try to disrupt it by foisting these looters on the shoulders of the people, i.e., the workers, the middle class, the students and revolutionary youth. This affair has not ended yet.

To release or not to release Bal Thackarey is not the main issue. Mr. Naik, Mr. Chavan, Thackarey and their advisers will decide that issue according to their own convenience. I do not wish to enter into it, for that is not the main problem.

The main problem is how to forge unity of the people. A revolutionary upsurge does not mean an insurrection of looters; we have to bring this home to the romantic youths and to take them forward to a real upsurge; that is the main problem. And

this is the problem which the Communist Party and other democratic forces have to solve.

After the experience of this uprising of looters, that section of the Shiv Sena youths which is really for progress should give up the pro-capitalist, disruptive path and ideology of the Shiv Sena and take to a new path. Anybody can tell that the path propounded by the leaders of the Shiv Sena has absolutely nothing to do with the Great Shivaji's path.

(Translated from Marathi)

POST-MORTEM OF RIOTS

Direct and indirect protagonists of the riots which took place in Bombay from 7 to 11 February, are attempting to white-wash those dark riots as "a people's" spontaneous struggle. In our last four editorials, we have scraped through that white-wash. In those four articles we have narrated with full evidence, the factual story of who started these riots and how.

But how could such riots flare up in an advanced and important city like Bombay and how could it continue for five days? The reply to this question is that the riots were not a sudden conflagration. Those riots were the culmination of the politics of rioting, looting and burning which the Shiv Sena fostered in Bombay during the last twenty seven months since its inception and the covert and overt encouragement which that awful politics received from the Congress rulers of Maharashtra.

A number of marathi unemployed youths, marathi middle class folk and even a section of young workers were attracted to the Shiv Sena, because of the blare of propaganda that it was formed with the intention of securing a priority in jobs, business and housing to the marathi people. That Maharashtra must have priority in Bombay is true. But it is the Congress regime and the big business groups with their stranglehold on the economic life of Bombay, who are responsible for the Maharashtra not getting such a priority.

Ever since the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti was founded, it vigorously and repeatedly demanded priority for Maharashtra in jobs, business and other fields which Bombay provided. Since 1957 Samiti MLAs raised their voice for that demand by tabling resolutions in the Legislative Assembly. The Congress rulers of Maharashtra too, repeatedly gave assurances of fulfilling that demand. But in practice the rulers did not raise even their little finger to implement these assurances.

The reason for this inactivity of the rulers is that the Congress regime is a regime of capitalists. Capitalism in order to exploit working people always needs a 'reserve army of the unemployed' at hand. The man from other provinces who comes to Bombay as a lonely individual, leaving his family behind, in order to barely survive somehow or other, is ready to do any labour on low wages. But the Maharashtrian, who is a local man and who has the strength of entire Maharashtra behind him, confidently fights for his demands and rights. That is why it is beneficial for the capitalists of Bombay to have a constant flood of unemployed persons from other provinces flowing into Bombay. Such a state of affairs also enables the capitalists and the reactionary Congress rulers to disrupt the unity of the common people by instigating linguistic and provincial quarrels among them. During the Congress regime, Bombay has got the imprint of a lumpen city, particularly because of the growth of the bootleggers and their illicit distillation centres which are the product of the senseless, vicious and bankrupt policy of prohibition, and because of the great influx of the gangsters coming into this city daily in order to set up their trade of which they are assured a stable growth.

Besides, under the Congress regime, unemployment and poverty are growing all over India. The country has only a handful of big cities like Bombay. Naturally unemployed persons from rural areas in all provinces trek to these cities. It is true that it is impossible for Bombay and Maharashtra to bear the heavy responsibility of offering sustenance to all these unemployed persons from all over the country. It is also true that persons who are permanent local residents of Maharashtra must get priority for jobs, business and housing in Bombay. But the way to achieve this does not consist of looking upon the poor and middleclass people from other provinces who have come here for jobs as enemies, of hating them and of launching riots against them. If such feelings of hatred between Maharashtra and non-Maharashtra spread in Bombay and riots between divergent linguistic sections start occurring, the entire democratic movement and working people's organisations in the city will be uprooted, which will be a boon to the capitalists and the Congress regime.

However, one cannot forget that over eight million Maharashtrais are settled in other provinces of India. Some people might perhaps be surprised to learn that about three hundred thousand Maharashtrais reside in Tamilnadu and about four hundred thousand in Kerala. If a riot-mongering and provincialist campaign of attacking persons from other provinces, in order to drive them out, persists in Bombay, there is a danger of an eruption of similar counter-campaigns against Maharashtrais in other provinces. Let the people of Maharashtra beware, that if such a state of affairs materialises, we will have to own the responsibility for the woes and curses of those Maharashtrais.

The problem of securing priority for marathi people in Bombay can be solved only by waging a united struggle against capitalism and against the Congress regime. Had the Shiv Sena movement been based on such a democratic and progressive outlook, in consonance with national integration, we and all the progressive parties would have supported it. But though the Shiv Sena initially professed to be a non-political organisation formed for the purpose of promoting the interests of the marathi people, the brunt of the attack of its leaders, right from the beginning, was against anti-congress parties, especially against the left parties which propagated socialism and its politics consisted of attacking those poor people, workers and middle class folk who hailed from other provinces.

In the very first public meeting of the Shiv Sena at Shivaji Park, its chief Bal Thackarey indulged in vulgar vituperations against left parties and the Samiti and pouring scorn on non-Maharashtrais as 'usurpers', 'aggressors' and 'Yendu-Gundu' and gave a call for driving them out of Bombay. Immediately after the end of that meeting, shops and restaurants of South Indians in Western Dadar were attacked and looted. A Shiv Sena procession to the Fort area also terminated in assaults on hawkers, breaking and looting of shops and stone-throwing on a crowd which was watching a hockey-match. It became almost a routine for every public meeting of the Shiv Sena to be followed by orgies of assaults, arson and looting in some part of the city or other. The Congress rulers blatantly allowed these acts of arson, loot and rioting to continue. Because the Shiv Sena

was useful to these rulers for fighting the opposition parties, especially the left parties.

The general election of 1967, gave clear proof of this. In those general elections the programme of the Sampoorna Maharashtra Samiti had given prominence to the problem of redressing the injustice on the marathi border area. But the Shiv Sena, which today professes extreme concern for solving the problem of the marathi border areas, had in those elections, opposed each and every Samiti candidate. In order to oppose the Samiti, it had supported the Congress candidates in some constituencies, in some it had supported Swatantra party candidates, in one or two constituencies it had backed the Jan Sangh and in one or two constituencies the Republican Party of B. C. Kamble.

Behind these incongruous and unprincipled antics of the Shiv Sena there was but one thread of consistency. It was that of opposing the Sampoorna Maharashtra Samiti, which was fighting for justice to the marathi border areas. Before those elections, the Shiv Sena had not supported the 'Sachivalaya Bandh' satyagraha which the Samiti had organised on August 25, 1966, for the cause of the marathi border areas. The Shiv Sena leaders are now talking of preventing the leaders of Central Ministers from entering Bombay, till the marathi border areas get justice. But where was the Shiv Sena when, after the general elections, the Sampoorna Maharashtra Samiti gave a call for demonstrations at the venues of all functions attended by Union and Maharashtra State Ministers?

When the Samiti held a conference at Kolhapur, to give a call for a Maharashtra-wide satyagraha in the cause of the marathi border areas, *Marmik*, the organ of the Shiv Sena had, instead of welcoming the move, slandered it. When on 10 December, 1967, thousands of Samiti volunteers facing the attacks of truckloads of Congress goondas and police repression, conducted a huge demonstration before Shri Yashwantrao Chavan who had come to attend an MPCC meeting at Sangli, the Shiv Sena leaders had expressed opposition to that demonstration. When the Samiti decided to call for 'Bombay Bandh' to support the cause of the marathi border areas, the Shiv Sena

leaders had opposed that decision and had ordered their followers to break that strike and hartal.

The weapon of Shiv Sena served the Congress rulers not only for opposing the Samiti, but for opposing all movements led by left parties. That is why, when a mob of Shiv Sena followers attacked the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union office at night and burnt it (on 27 December 1967), the police of the Maharashtra Government merely stood there, passively watching that outrage. No 'Panchnama' of that offence was made. None of the offenders were arrested. Bal Thackarey, the Shiv Sena chief, issued a statement publicly acclaiming that act of arson, dacoity and loot and after one year he pompously celebrated the anniversary of that filthy act.

It is also worthwhile mentioning here, that in the 1967 elections, the Shiv Sena had backed the candidature of Shri Harish Mahindra Seth, and seven hundred workers from the factory of 'Mahindra & Mahindra', belonging to the same Mahindra Seth were retrenched on the plea of 'recession'. Eighty per cent of the retrenched workers were Maharashtrians. Twelve hundred workers from the 'Premier Automobiles' concern of Lalchand Hirachand Seth and Bharat Walchand Seth were also retrenched under the excuse of 'recession'. Eighty per cent of those retrenched workers too were Maharashtrians.

Thousands of textile workers have been rendered jobless due to the closure of four textile mills in Bombay. Twelve thousand 'casual' textile workers have been thrown on the streets by the textile mill magnates in the name of the 20% power-cut. More than eighty per cent of those workers are Maharashtrians. But the Shiv Sena leaders, who indulge in brave talk of a struggle for securing eighty per cent of the jobs in Bombay for Maharashtrians, have not cared to utter even a verbal protest against the capitalists who have thrown thousands of marathi workers into unemployment, leave alone their organising a movement against this growing unemployment. It is but natural that such a Shiv Sena should be supported by the big business henchmen of the Swatantra Party and others. Because, the Shiv Sena cry that it is the South Indian workers and middle class employees who are responsible for the growing unemployment among the marathi people—served the interests of big business.

But Thackarey, the Shiv Sena Chief, had in a meeting at Thana, declared that he was a 'Hitlerite' and had openly propagated fascism. Yet the love of the so-called democratic Congress rulers for Shiv Sena was so overflowing, that when the 'Shiv Senawallas' indulged in arson and assaults on the offices and activists of other parties, as well as on non-Maharashtrians, the Chief Minister Shri Vasant Rao Naik had blatantly covered up that goondaism by publicly declaring in the legislative assembly that "such acts do happen due to exuberance of enthusiasm".

When the people of Bombay started getting sick of the hooliganism and riot-mongering politics of the Shiv Sena and when the Shiv Sena was literally routed in the municipal elections at Poona and Nasik, its leaders took up the issue of the marathi border areas as a new stunt to gain popularity. Really speaking only a united Maharashtra-wide movement by all opposition parties in Maharashtra alone can create the strength needed for compelling the Congress rulers at the centre to give justice to the marathi border-areas. But it is precisely such unity that the Shiv Sena is opposed to. That is why the Congress leaders want the Shiv Sena, for creating disruption in the struggle for the marathi border areas also.

The Shiv Sena led movement for the border areas inevitably led to rioting. Only then, were the Congress rulers forced to put up a show of opposition to the Shiv Sena. That is why Shri Yeshwantrao Chavan, the Central Home Minister had to hypocritically whitewash himself, by declaring in the Rajya Sabha that, a few months after the formation of the Shiv Sena he had called it 'Fascist' in a speech before the 'Progressive Group' in Bombay. But the printed record of that meeting shows that in that very speech Yeshwantrao Chavan had eulogised the Shiv Sena as saying that "the Shiv Sena was carrying forward the patriotic traditions of Shivaji Maharaj and Lokmanya Tilak". He had also said in that speech, "they are our brothers. Therefore we must try to understand them".

Shri Vasant Rao Naik, the Chief Minister of Maharashtra is also now pretending that he was opposed to the Shiv Sena right from the beginning. If Vasant Rao Naik does not remember that he had attended the anniversary celebration of the Shiv

Sena journal *Marmik* as Chief Guest and had praised that journal, a copy of *Marmik* with a report of his speech along with his photographs on that occasion, can be given to him as a present.

Shri Vasantrya Dada Patil, President of the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee, had also attended an anniversary celebration of *Marmik* as Chief guest. He too had in his speech on that occasion paid compliments to *Marmik*.

In these circumstances, for Yeshwantrao Chavan, Vasantrya Naik and Vasantrya Dada Patil who now proclaim that they were opposed to the Shiv Sena ever since its inception, is the height of hypocrisy.

Also, what did Vasantrya Naik do after riots had actually erupted out of Shiv Sena demonstrations on 7th of February? He went on some tour somewhere. The speech advocating peace that he made on the radio after his return, avoided even a reference to the name of Shiv Sena. In an interview to journalists at Delhi, he made a glaring attempt at exonerating the Shiv Sena by declaring that "the Bombay riots were caused by goondas who had no connection with politics." Even after clear indication of ebbing of the riots became obvious, Vasantrya Naik set at nought prison-rules and rules of the Preventive Detention Act and arranged to have a 'call for peace' by Bal Thakarey to be brought out by the Inspector-General of Prisons and to have it published, in order that Bal Thakarey should get credit of stopping the riots.

The Shiv Sena journal *Marmik*, however, in its issues during the last two weeks, has not condemned the riots by a single word and has been brazenly carrying on provocative propaganda, for instigating a new riot. Yet Vasantrya Naik is deliberately turning a blind eye to it. Is he in any way different from Yeshwantrao Chavan?

This very Yeshwantrao Chavan had flown by helicopter all the way from Delhi to Bombay to attend a reception to Bal Gandharva. Yet when, Bombay was engulfed by such violent riots for five days, when public and private property worth crores of rupees was flagrantly burnt, looted and destroyed on such a vast scale, when so many people were killed and wounded in police firing, Yeshwantrao, as Central Home Minister did

not find time to come to Bombay. He was said to be engrossed in some minor function at Ichalkaranji.

Thus the monstrous riots of 7th to 11th February were the fruit of the poison-tree planted and nurtured by the Shiv Sena leaders, the Congress rulers and the big capitalists. It is only when the riots went beyond control and the Congress rulers' own regime was threatened with nationwide infamy, they had to wield the weapon of repression to check the riots. But the inevitable experience that more innocent and common people fall victims to repression than miscreants, proved true this time too. In such a state of affairs, however hard the Congress rulers might try to escape the onus of their guilt in the face of a nationwide hue and cry against the riots, those efforts are fruitless. Lastly it must be emphasised that the vicious and undesirable turn which Bombay's politics has taken can be averted and that politics can be brought on the proper path, only if all the left parties rally together and organise a gigantic people's movement on peaceful and democratic lines for the marathi border areas, against growing unemployment and priority for local people in Bombay.

[Editorial in the *Daily Maratha*, Bombay
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