

Investigate threat to PM carefully

The government must subject to the most threadbare scrutiny the alleged letter unearthed by the police in which there is a suggestion that a Maoist group may be contemplating a “Rajiv Gandhi-type” plot against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

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This country has suffered the unsettling political consequences of the assassination of a Prime Minister and also of a former PM who appeared to be well placed to return to office. For the sake of the country, we cannot countenance the targeting of the nation's leader again.

The Union government, through home minister Rajnath Singh speaking from Srinagar, as well as the Maharashtra state government, have spoken in unambiguous terms of an assassination plot by Naxalites. Television and the print media have seen wall-to-wall coverage, evidently based on high-level briefings. The Pune police have filed a chargesheet in a local court as the alleged dramatis personae of the conspiracy are spread across several cities, and there seems a Pune connection.

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In order to unearth the ramifications of the alleged plot, it would have been better by far, if the government had moved with alacrity but without publicity. Prudence was all the more necessary as the five people arrested so far are well-regarded individuals — among them a prominent lawyer, a dalit activist and a Nagpur university professor of English.

They have collectively been called “urban Maoists” — at best a loose term signifying prejudice more than substance — by the authorities. Those arrested are thought by the police to be associated with the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist).

A dalit angle can also be deduced, and this lends the affair complexity and carries a political component as well. In the event, the investigative work of the police and the marshalling of facts in court will be watched very closely.

Dalit celebrations are taken out on December 31 each year at Bhima Koregaon in the Pune area to commemorate a 200-year-old military event. Last year, dalits were challenged by a right-wing group associated with some Hindutva outfits and violence — apparently pre-meditated — ensued. The Hindutva leaders were not arrested in spite of a Supreme Court instruction, but some dalits and left-wingers were. The police are evidently linking elements involved in the alleged anti-PM plot with participants at Bhima Koregaon.

In the trial court, the defence has argued that the so-called letter between senior Maoists that was unearthed in a raid in Delhi is a fabrication. Indeed, it is surprising that an assassination plot should be set down in black and white in this technological age. At any rate, the police has a big task on its hands. It should go about its work quietly. The politicians too should desist from playing their standard games by exploiting the media.