

AROUND THE WORLD

THE GUARDIAN ON INDIA AT 70

Democracy in action

WHEN the British departed from the subcontinent 70 years ago, the most appropriate epitaph was probably provided by an Indian official who remarked: "You British believe in fair play. You have left India in the same condition of chaos as you found it." When the British predicted there would be many more partitions, it was because the former colonial masters thought "no one can make a nation out of a continent of many nations". However, gloomy prophecies of fragmentation have been proved wrong.

India considered a democratic counterweight to China

In an Asian century, India has long been considered as a democratic counterweight to its larger authoritarian neighbour, China. Last year India's economy grew faster than China's, although alarming pollution levels suggest Delhi risks making many of Beijing's mistakes. Worryingly, Indian and Chinese troops have in recent weeks been engaged in a tense Himalayan standoff. But India's biggest threat is internal. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is an impressive politician but he also runs a government backed by rightwing Hindu extremists who condone and actively support violence against minorities, especially Muslims. The quest for equality and the rule of law have shown impressive resilience in India, but they are under threat from within.