

*The difference between a moral man and a man of honor is that the latter regrets a discreditable act, even when it has worked and he has not been caught.*  
H.L. Mencken

## Political turns and twists

Politics in this country is witnessing strange turns and twists. Having successfully led an anti-BJP alliance in Bihar and winning the polls, chief minister Nitish Kumar has chosen to ditch the alliance and return to the BJP fold. Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi says he was aware of what was going on between Nitish and BJP behind the scene for the last three to four months but doesn't say what he did to prevent the strange denouement. CPM refuses to oblige its general secretary Sitaram Yechuri by nominating him for the Rajya Sabha for the third consecutive term. In West Bengal, the Congress and the CPM which had been working in close concert decide to part ways and set up their own candidates for the fifth RS seat. In Nitish's JD(U) several legislators stay away from his swearing in ceremony (for the sixth time in 10 years). Protest against the alliance with BJP is made by several State units of the JD(U). In Gujarat several Congress legislators desert their party to jump on to the BJP bandwagon, making the Congress president Sonia Gandhi's political secretary Ahmed Patel's return to Rajya Sabha uncertain. Mayavati and Akhilesh speak in one voice in denouncing Nitish's 'betrayal' of the people of Bihar.

Through all these turns and twists the bigger picture that is emerging is that the BJP is trying to make its position unassailable before the coming Assembly elections in several States. This is a dress rehearsal for the bigger battle of 2019. Opposition parties may fret and fume, but in every round of the fight they are being outwitted and weakened by the BJP. Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad has accused the BJP in the Rajya Sabha of 'stealing' their legislators in Gujarat. In his anger and excitement he perhaps forgot that what he said amounted to an admission that Congress legislators are venal and vulnerable to enticements. If you cannot keep your flock together, then why blame the BJP?

The Opposition is not only disunited but in utter disarray. It does not have a common ideology, a common programme and a presentable and acceptable leader who can inspire the confidence of the people and command their respect. What the Opposition is lacking is its credibility with the people. Nitish's volte face further eroded that credibility. Unless the Opposition is able to establish its bona fides with the people that they can be trusted with power, the fragility of the Opposition parties will only grow and the sole beneficiary will be the BJP.

# Timing of next Lok Sabha elections

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has blown the bugle for her anti-BJP campaign at the annual Martyr's Day Rally in Kolkata on July 21. She has given a call for removing BJP from power in 2019 Lok Sabha elections by the joint efforts of all the anti-saffron forces. She has conveyed her willingness to be of help to forge the widest possible unity of the opposition parties to challenge the BJP led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in the 2019 poll. The Trinamool Congress supremo has announced a BJP-Quit India type of campaign from August 9 to August 30 in all the districts of West Bengal to expose the "misdeeds" of both the state BJP and the centre headed by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and she wants that this campaign should take place in other states under the leadership of the Congress and the local regional parties. Mamata has the penchant for coining effective slogans. But this time, her slogan of BJP-Quit India, has not been appropriate. There cannot be any parallel with Gandhiji's call to British to quit India in August 1942. The BJP is a Party deeply rooted in the traditions of this country that is mainly Bharat. The Party's ideologies

that are divisive have to be fought fiercely by the united opposition. So the best slogan could have been BJP Hatao, Desh Bachao. However, the essence of Mamata's call is that all the opposition parties which have supported the opposition candidates for the posts of President and Vice-President, have to remain united and be a part of the massive campaign against the Narendra Modi government on the basis of focused programmes dealing with the urgent issues of the day. BJP which supported the BJP presidential candidate Ram Nath Kovind, has decided to support Gopal Krishna Gandhi in the vice-presidential elections on August 5 and that is a big advance for the opposition. The Congress is the main opposition Party and it is the only challenger to the resurging BJP in major states like Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh in the coming assembly elections. In Gujarat, the Party has got some fresh setback with the resignation of SSVaghela from the Party. There is little time left for the next assembly elections in Gujarat and it is crucial for the Congress to improve its performance in Gujarat

assembly elections. The Congress leadership must get its mojo back and jump into campaign against the centre and the Prime Minister with full determination and gusto. The BJP and the media might be giving the impression that the coming assembly elections in the Congress ruled states and in the BJP ruled states, are all going to the BJP's pocket but the ground reality is not so straight. The political parties may not be that active against the BJP government as they should have been, but the masses are disgruntled and even without the political leadership, the affected sections, like farmers, small traders and the artisans are on the streets agitating against the centre's policies. The Congress and the opposition have to articulate these feelings of the discontented masses in the coming months. For opposition, there is very little time for preparations. There is a strong possibility that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi who is known for giving

surprises, may call for Lok Sabha elections in 2018, a year before the scheduled period in 2019. Exercises have been done at the level of the BJP think tanks as also key advisers of the Prime Minister. The option is open PM will be taking the final decision after the presentation of the next budget based on both political and economic ground reality. Despite all talk that at the level of the BJP leaders and their chest thumping at the recent successes, the economic reality is very grim. The farmers are in dire distress and the discontent is more rampant in the BJP ruled states. The young dalits who saw hopes in the Prime Minister before the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, are losing their faith in the BJP government. The informal sector is in a severe crisis. The BJP leadership will not like the opposition parties to give time to strengthen the index of opposition unity to fight the BJP. PM will like to take on an unprepared opposition if the projections of economy for

2018, are not favourable. BJP has huge funds both from within the country and also overseas. The Party machinery under President Amit Shah is fully geared up to face Lok Sabha elections at any time, but the opposition is not in that condition. The Congress machinery is not at all geared up. The party has problems with both funds and organization. The leadership has to take immediate steps to bolster these two vital areas. A demoralized Congress can never lead the opposition to victory against the BJP in the next Lok Sabha poll. The Congress has to recall the 2003-2004 period of Vajpayee regime when the Shining India was at its peak. Not even senior Congress leaders thought of the Congress crossing 200 seats. They were reconciled to BJP victory, but the masses decided otherwise. In 2018-19, the tasks are however much more difficult with a highly effective BJP organization and a successful Modi-Shah duo at the top, but ultimately, the underprivileged masses will decide and the opposition, especially the Congress has to remain connected with them in the remaining months. That is the only guarantee of the defeat of the saffron forces. (IPA)

# LEGAL WATCH

## Right to privacy and Constitution

### REFLEX ACTION

1. Centre directed to proceed against Tea Companies for recovery of wages. The Centre has been directed by the Supreme Court to proceed against tea companies under the Tea Act, 1933 for the recovery of wages for lakhs of workmen who lost their jobs with the closure of tea estates in Assam, West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu [International Union of Food Agriculture v. Union of India, Contempt Petition 16 of 2012, order dated 21.07.2017].

ii. Survivor of rape with low mental age cannot get benefit of child friendly law: The Supreme Court rejected the plea of a mother on behalf of her daughter, who has cerebral palsy, and had been raped, that she be treated in accordance with her mental age of 6-8 years, rather than her biological age of 38 years. This would have entitled her to a child friendly trial under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012. The Court held that the law did not allow it to recognise her mental age, but to take into account only her biological age [X v. State, Criminal Appeal 1217 of 2017, order dated 21.07.2017].

iii. Insolvency proceedings against Essar Steel to continue: The Gujarat High Court refused to quash the decision of the RBI to initiate insolvency proceedings against Essar Steel Ltd., under the recent Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016. The RBI had issued a press release on 13.06.2017 directing banks to initiate proceedings against 12 companies, including Essar Steel, which had an outstanding of more than Rs. 5,000 Crores, with 60% or more were classified as non-performing assets. In dismissing the petition, the court noted that the proceedings were pending before the National Company Law Tribunal and that Essar Steel had debt of more than Rs. 45,000 Crores and NPAs more than Rs. 32,000 Crores [Essar Steel Ltd. v. Reserve Bank of India, SCA No. 12434 of 2017, order dated 17.07.2017].

iv. GST on sanitary napkins challenged: The GST imposed on sanitary napkins was the subject matter of multiple challenges this week. In the Delhi High Court, a JNU student filed a petition stating that the imposition of 12% GST on sanitary napkins was discriminatory and would adversely impact the health of women. The Court sought the response of the Government [Zarminsar Khan v. Union of India, WP(C), 6034 of 2017, order dated 18.07.2017]. Another petition was filed in the Bombay High Court, which raised similar issues. The Government has been

without any regulation and with fake prescriptions [Mayurimithun Patil v. Union of India, PIL 170 of 2015, order dated 20.07.2017].

viii. No Environment Compensation charge for pulses: The Delhi High Court has held that pulses would be considered essential food grain and vehicles carrying them would not be subject to the levy of an Environment Compensation Charge (ECC). The ECC had been mandated by the Supreme Court in October 2015 but had exempted certain vehicles carrying essential commodities - food grain and oil [Narela Food Processing Industries Welfare Association v. Govt. of NCT of Delhi, WP(C) 7211 of 2016, order dated 17.07.2017].

ix. Passports can be revoked only with sufficient cause: The Delhi High Court reiterated that a person's passport could only be revoked if there was sufficient cause to do so. The Passport Act, 1967 only permits the revocation of a person's passport in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India, security of India, friendly relations with another country or in the interest of the general public. The court held that the revocation of a person's passport was a serious violation of their fundamental rights and could only be done on the above grounds [Sikandar Khan v. Union of India, WP(C) 5315 of 2017, order dated 06.07.2017].

x. FIR to be registered for corruption in resettlement of ex-servicemen: The Delhi High Court has directed the CBI to lodge FIRs in relation to allegations of corruption in the Directorate General Resettlement (DGR) in a case filed by the ex-servicemen. The DGR is responsible for training and finding employment opportunities for servicemen after their retirement. The allegations relate to the impersonation of ex-servicemen who were provided business in connivance with public officials [Lt. Col. Naveen Kumar Anand (Retd.) v. Union of India, WP(C) 602 of 2017, dated 20.07.2017].

xi. Criminal proceedings against Shah Rukh Khan stayed: The Gujarat High Court stayed criminal proceedings against Shah Rukh Khan, which were initiated after a person died at the Vadodra railway station where a stampede like situation had developed when the actor was promoting his film Raees. The Court will examine whether the complaint sufficiently discloses an offence against the actor [Shah Rukh Khan v. State of Gujarat, SCA (Quashing) 5404 of 2017, order dated 20.07.2017]. (IPA/Clancloud)



Artistes dressed as various gods during a religious procession 'Diggi Pad Yatra' to have darshan of Lord Kalyan, in Jaipur.

### QUICK CROSSWORD 1652



- Across**
- Clothing (6)
  - Duplicate (4)
  - Heart (4)
  - Picnic basket (6)
  - Via (7)
  - Courses (anag) (7)
  - Feedbox (6)
  - Treaty (4)
  - Declare untrue (4)
  - Beat (6)
- Down**
- Curved support (4)
  - Great fear (6)
  - Rub clean (4)
  - Constricted (6)
  - Dress-maker's guide (7)
  - Sudden increase (7)
  - Naturally talented (6)
  - At an angle (6)
  - Shortly (4)
  - Stalk (4)

**Previous solution**  
Across: 1. Recollect, 5. House, 7. Grasp, 9. Axle, 10. Intent, 12. Supple, 14. Tale, 17. Young, 18. Eloquent, 19. Positioned.  
Down: 2. Equal, 3. Obey, 4. Legend, 5. Craze, 6. Hearsay, 8. Pottery, 11. Slugs, 13. Pulo, 15. Adore, 16. Veto.

### SUDOKU 1933

	7	6	3	1				
	5		7	1	8	2		
	9		6		8			
5	1			9	6			
7		3		2				
9	4	6	1	2				
		5	2					
1	2		4	8				

### Yesterday's Solution 1932

6	9	3	4	8	7	1	5	2
2	4	8	9	5	1	3	6	7
5	1	7	3	6	2	9	8	4
4	8	1	7	3	6	2	9	5
7	6	2	5	1	9	4	3	8
3	5	9	8	2	4	7	1	6
1	7	4	6	9	5	8	2	3
9	3	6	2	7	8	5	4	1
8	2	5	1	4	3	6	7	9

**DISCLAIMER**  
The views in the articles published here are absolutely the views of the author and The Echo of India does not stand liable for them.