

*If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail*  
Abraham Maslow

## Just fire and fury?

While the verbal war between China and India goes on, that between the US and North Korea has the potentiality of turning into a real war in which the possibility of use of nuclear weapons cannot be ruled out. North Korea has been extremely belligerent and repeatedly threatening to launch a nuclear strike against the US. It has been boasting that its missiles can now hit any part of the USA. The latest threat from Pyongyang is to hit the US base of Guam by the middle of this month, just a few days ahead. President Trump has responded by saying that such a threat would be met with fire and fury. Today, there are several countries possessing nuclear weapons – some declared and possibly one or two undeclared. But no country has shown the irresponsibility of openly talking about the actual use of its nukes. North Korea is an exception.

Nuclear war involves not merely the two hostile countries but also millions of people of other countries which are not involved in any dispute or causes of war. Radiation carried by clouds and rains can kill many in distant countries. Clouds and rains carrying radioactive substance can pollute air and water. Radiation can cause the birth of deformed children and induce cancer. What North Korea is doing is just insane. Sanctions imposed by the United Nations have had no effect on North Korea. Good sense has taken leave of its rulers long ago. The sanity of the current incumbent in the White House is also questioned by many Americans themselves. Pyongyang is not even in a mood to listen to China which has warned it again and again to refrain from carrying on with its programme of nuclear weaponization.

If China cannot have a restraining influence on North Korea, no one else can. A Trump adviser has said launching a nuclear attack on the US will be suicidal for North Korea. But it is not Kim Jong-un alone or the North Koreans as a people who will commit suicide. Then will kill many, many more in other countries, too. The world seems to be helplessly watching and waiting with bated breath for the inevitable. Most panicky is of course North Korea's northern neighbour – South Korea which will have to bear the brunt of any attack by Pyongyang. Unless Kim Jong-un is just threatening, the next few days will be the most anxious ones after the end of the Second World War.

# Examples set by Pakistani courts

## REFLEX ACTION

K Ravendran

Strange things do happen when one's heart is not in the right place. But most well-behaved Indians would have felt at least a couple of beats in pain when they heard about the disqualification of Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif by the country's Supreme Court in the case relating to the so-called Panama papers.

Not that Nawaz Sharif was a great friend of India, ever willing to go the extra mile to mend the genetical discord between the two neighbours. He may have been a little less venomous than most of his predecessors, or likely successors, including Imran Khan, the chief possible option, if it's not a more plausible military alternative, and on whose petition Sharif had to suffer the ignominy of having been prime minister for the longest term and yet failing to complete a full tenure. The Panama papers were not exclusive to Pakistan. There were more Indian references and names in the expose than those figuring from across the border; but we haven't heard of any heads rolling here yet. In fact, some of those names continue to be as powerful, enjoying office, clout and protection. The more patriotic among us even argue that the Pakistan prime minister has been disqualified on the ground of technicalities and it is not a case of corruption, which is yet to come up for hearing at some other court. The argument is based on the fact that Sharif's disqualification has been pronounced as the court found him falling in honesty and integrity, two attributes that are considered essential for anyone to become a member of Pakistan parliament. Sharif had told the court that he did not own any of those shell companies that were found to hold huge overseas assets on behalf of his children.

He was found to be playing smart, by failing to declare that the companies were in the name of his children, playing on the technicality that he did not own anything. Over the years, the Pakistan Supreme Court has taken a strident stand against corruption

while our own judicial system has been clearly soft-peddling on it. In a historical verdict in 2009, the Pak court had outlawed as unconstitutional an amnesty arrangement named the National Reconciliation Ordinance that prevented the prosecution of the then president Asif Ali Zardari and other politicians for corruption.

In another sensational case, Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani was forced out of office after the Supreme Court convicted him for contempt of court for failing to pursue a corruption case against president Zardari. Unfortunately, the track record of our higher courts in deciding corruption cases is far from credit worthy.

The cases of former Tamil Nadu chief minister Jayalalitha for amassing disproportionate assets and Lalu Prasad Yadav in the fodder scam are still fresh in memory. Jayalalitha, who was accused of acquiring properties worth more than Rs 66.65 crore as well as jewellery, cash deposits, investments and a fleet of luxury cars, became the first chief minister of a state to be convicted for misusing her office and was jailed. But she came back to power after a high court overturned the conviction on the basis of certain technical calculations used to rework the size of the assets.

It is a different matter that the Supreme Court reversed that verdict later, but not before she enjoyed another term of pomp and unchallenged power, which was brought to an end only by her death in mysterious circumstances and not through judicial intervention. Lalu Prasad Yadav, convicted and later

out of jail following a court order, continues to be the big daddy of Bihar politics. Flaunting his credentials as the champion of secularism and opposition unity, the RJD leader had been going great guns until a series of CBI raids on the properties owned by his family in different parts of the country unearthed scandals of unmatched proportions. All this is despite the fact that he was tainted and disqualified to contest any election.

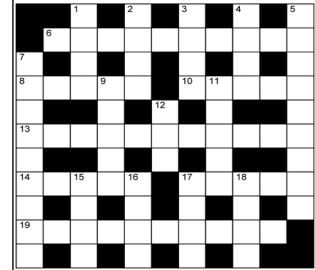
Just as in Jayalalitha's case, corruption cases in India linger for almost a lifetime, making even conviction a mockery. The Central Vigilance Commissioner recently disclosed that as many as 300 cases related to corruption were pending for the last 20 years in 80 courts across the country. Some 3,500 cases have been pending for more than five years. Recently, the CBI informed the Supreme Court that that despite a statutory ban on higher courts staying trial in corruption cases, some 138 cases under the prevention of corruption law have been pending for the past 15 years, due to court stays. The agency said any further delay would imply loss of evidence and failure of these cases. CBI stressed that in criminal cases, particularly corruption cases, such time lapse had serious implications for producing evidence through witnesses. Indians, including our courts, are reconciled to the idea that corruption is a typical way of life for us and is therefore something that merits address as a matter of routine. At least our courts need to get mindful of the evils of the practice and how it retards the progress of the nation and drop the bookish approach in reading the law.

They must interpret corruption laws in the context of the spirit of the law and in favour of the state and the society rather than in the interests of the offenders, which they often end up doing on the pretext of saving one innocent even if a thousand guilty go scot free. The charity has to end at some point. (IPA)



Students dressed up as Lord Krishna and other Hindu God's performing during Krishna Jayanti celebration, at MGR Janakai Womens College, in Chennai on Friday.

## QUICK CROSSWORD 1663



- Across**  
6. Nonsense (10)  
8. Very angry (5)  
10. Soldier's decoration (5)  
13. Plant-eating (11)  
14. Japanese mattress (5)  
17. Shoulder warmer (5)  
19. Seaside tower (10)
- Down**  
1. Computer input (4)  
2. Slight advantage (4)  
3. Affectedly proper (4)  
4. Employee (4)  
5. Sale to retailers (9)  
7. Dusk (9)  
9. Forbidden (5)  
11. Planet (5)  
12. Spreading plant (3)  
15. Pulls (4)  
16. Jet down (4)  
18. Exhibit (4)  
18. As well (4)

**Previous solution**  
Across: 1. Attire, 3. Twin, 7. Core, 8. Hamper, 10. Complete, 13. Scurrow, 16. Trough, 17. Pact, 18. Deny, 19. Rhythm.  
Down: 1. Arch, 2. Terror, 4. Wipe, 5. Narrow, 6. Pattern, 9. Upsurge, 11. Gifted, 12. Aslant, 14. Soom, 15. Stem.

# Narmada stir in focus again

The health of Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) leader Medha Patkar, who is on an indefinite hunger strike, is deteriorating at a fast rate. One of her supporters said on phone from the fast venue in Badwani district that this morning her blood pressure was recorded at 100/60. She, along with 11 other activists, is on fast to press the NBA demand for proper and foolproof rehabilitation of people whose houses and fields are going to be submerged the moment the water in Sardar Sarovar Dam reservoir rises to its maximum height.

AAP workers held a demonstration in support of Narmada agitation at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi. They also laid a siege to the bungalow of Lal Singh Arya, minister in-charge of Narmada Valley Development Authority (NVDA) in the state capital. Opposition parties and NGOs are criticising the attitude of the minister towards the problems of the affected people.

They point out that instead of worrying about the thousands of families being forced to leave their homes and hearths due to the impending submergence of a huge area in Narmada valley; Arya is busy

campaigning for the urban civic body polls. Vast areas in four districts of the state will go under water because of the decision to fill water up to the highest level in the Sardar Sarovar Dam reservoir. But the minister is yet to visit the area even once. For the past several days, Arya was in Bhopal and in his assembly constituency Gohad, but could not find time to visit the submergence zone. Four districts – Dhar, Badwani, Alirajpur and Khargone – are in the submergence zone and according to government figures, around 72,000 persons will be displaced. Over 15,000 families are yet to be rehabilitated but the minister is unconcerned. CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan has been telling his colleagues to be on the move. But Arya, apparently, does not care. When asked, he recently said the local MLAs and minister in-charge were monitoring the situation!

Arya is just parroting the figures being supplied to him by NVDA officers. He is holding this department for the past three years but he is not showing any seriousness in dealing with the situation. The AAP activists who staged a demonstration in front of his

## FOCUS

### L.S. Herdenia

house had even brought a car with them to be offered to the minister so that he could tour the affected area.

They said that even drinking water was not available in the resettlement areas and the minister was peddling fake figures supplied to him by officers ensconced in air-conditioned chambers. They demanded that the minister visit the area, apprise himself of the facts and then tell the truth to the people. The Andolan is continuing to get support from social activists from various countries. The most unexpected support came from a Pakistani NGO named Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee (PKRC), which urged Government of India to intervene and solve the problems of the Narmada oustees.

PKRC secretary Farooq Tariq, in a message to those on hunger strike, said that 40,000 families of Narmada valley, their cattle, millions of trees, temple and mosques, schools

and relics of ancient civilizations (that will get submerged) are precious assets of India.

The government should not sacrifice Narmada Valley for the sake of protecting private profit," Tariq said. Despite her precarious health, Medha Patkar addressed the people present at the fast site and criticised Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar for wessailing out of his promise to raise the issues of dam-affected people.

"During his last visit to Rajghat in Dhar in September 2016, Kumar had promised to support the people affected due to the project. He is in possession of some important documents relating to the project but after his alliance with Narendra Modi, there is no hope of him raising the issue," she said. Later, NBA activists and locals took out a rally and burnt the effigy of chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. AAP leader Alok Agrawal alleged that the state

government had misguided the Supreme Court and gave it false information regarding the rehab works but in reality the government was yet provide basic amenities, including drinking water, electricity and roads.

The Narmada issue was also raised in Parliament by former union minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, who said that while the Supreme Court had asked the state government to rehabilitate the oustees by July 31, over 2.5 lakh people remained untouched by any official measure. The chief minister should speak to these people, he said during the Zero Hour in the Lok Sabha. Scindia alleged that the Madhya Pradesh government was providing wrong information on the issue. Union minister Narendra Singh Tomar, who hails from the state, accused Congress leaders of trying to hamper the developmental project which, he said, would benefit people in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan.

Work on the project has been going on since the days of Jawaharlal Nehru and the order of the apex court was followed to the last word, he said. Tomar added that Medha Patkar was playing politics. (IPA)

## SUDOKU: 1944

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6	3			5	2

## Yesterday's Solution 1943

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

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