

A boy can learn a lot from a dog: obedience, loyalty, and the importance of turning around three times before lying down.
Robert Benchley

Rumour mongering

Rumour-mongering with strong communal overtones has become a potential weapon in the hands of mischief-makers. A number of attacks on members of the dalit community in Uttar Pradesh can be attributed directly to mischievous rumour-mongering. Provocative rumours were spread in Kolkata on Thursday after the police chased away BJP workers from Lalbazar. To confuse and mislead the common man, rumours about the identity of the policemen deployed for peace-keeping were spread, as if the police force is deployed on their members' communal identity. The politically conscious people of Kolkata could not be influenced by such propaganda. They easily saw through the game. But the mischief-making potential of rumour-mongering cannot be underestimated and must be taken seriously. In the coming days there may be more determined efforts to spread such propaganda, obviously to reap electoral dividends.

It is now incumbent on political parties, non-political organizations and peace-loving and honest citizens to remain ever vigilant against this type of motivated propaganda. The social media is yet another instrument in the hands of mischief-makers to spread monstrous and horrendous lies to stir up communal passions. No law can stop this mischief. Only a conscious citizenry can. In every society there are some gullible people who will readily swallow even the most absurd lies and spread such lies in good faith. One such piece of vicious and morbid propaganda would have the people believe that Nehru and Jinnah were blood relations.

Hitler's propaganda minister Josef Goebbels used to say that if you have to tell lies, then tell the most monstrous lies and repeat them thousands of times; then the people will believe them and the lie will become a truth. Unfortunately, some people still believe in Goebbels' dictum. They are ever prepared to divide, destabilize and destroy a harmonious society to gain their narrow political ends. Of late, some rumour-mongers in social media were asked to disclose the 'sources' of their wild rumours. In many cases the 'sources' cited by them were found either not to exist or not to contain the passages purportedly quoted from them. Few recipients of such virulent propaganda have either the time or the inclination or the means to verify the sources. So the purveyors of lies get away with impunity.

In a democratic society there should be no bar on dissemination of information and ideas, no bar on an animated debate on any social or political question. But no democratic society can accept the right to spread harmful and divisive ideas and claim democratic freedom to do so. Unfortunately, our political parties are more occupied with thoughts of winning elections rather than with thoughts on educating the people on democratic values and rights.

Twists and turns in TN politics

REFLEX ACTION

S. Sethuraman

Tamil Nadu remains mired in political chaos, into the sixth month since the death of AIADMK Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, who had scripted victory for a second successive term in the May 2016 Assembly election, and was sworn on May 23 last year.

The party has now a tenuous hold on power; led by Mr E Palaniswami, with a strong dissident group headed by Mr O Panneerselvam, for mer CM, and the two factions, engaged in a no holds barred fight, have already been cultivating relationships with the BJP Government at the Centre. Their mutual antagonisms could well endanger the future of Ailing Mr Karunanidhi's DMK, worsted by Ms. Jayalalithaa, waits for a propitious moment to step into the breach, but the cycle of happenings in Tamil Nadu - one of the most indebted and drought-hit states - deprived of effective governance, takes strange turns. After successive meetings of faction leaders (MLAs and MPs) with Prime Minister Modi in New Delhi, it would appear that both sides would perhaps unwittingly let him and BJP leadership determine the future course of developments in Tamil Nadu, one of the major targeted states for BJP's aggrandisement. For one thing, CBI and tax raids and searches have come handy for the Centre to deploy against political adversaries. The Palaniswami Government, one of whose Ministers had his residence searched by tax authorities and seizing a large sum of cash allegedly intended for distribution to voters in bypoll, since deferred, has become more wary of the Big Brother in New Delhi.

While the Chief Minister, challenged by the leader of DMK opposition leader Mr M K Stalin to reconvene the Assembly for budget votes, keeps trying to weather storms now and then and building working relations with Central Ministries on certain projects and GST, Mr Palaniswami is aware of more turbulences ahead. He has still to get hold of the AIADMK organisation still nominally in the hands of

jailed Sasikalal followers. Mr Panneerselvam, with the support of 11 MLAs and several MPs, will not settle for anything less than the expulsion of Ms. Sasikalal and her backers but unmistakably he would like to replace Mr. Palaniswami at the head of Government. Into this disorderly firmament, TN superstar Mr Rajnikanth seems to be getting ready for an ill-defined political role. He noted political system in Tamil Nadu was 'rotten' though he named a few as 'able'. Days back, he asked his swarming "fans" to be ready "when the war comes", and if and when he entered politics, he would keep away those who are "money-minded and power-hungry".

As if anticipating some little trouble from quarters which would question his Tamil origin, the 67-year old star, having lived 23 years in Karnataka, declared himself to be a "patachai Tamizhan" (true Tamilian), who has been living for the past 44 years in Chennai - the base from where he built all his cinematic fame and made wealth. He might not therefore have been surprised when some workers of a fringe outfit, "Tamilar Munnetra Padai", dubbing him as a Kannadiga who should "stay away from politics" in Tamil Nadu, held a protest and burned an effigy near his residence. Security at the residence of superstar has now been tightened. Till for tat, Rajni's supporters organised a protest against this outfit in the South (Madurai).

The prospect of Mr Rajnikanth seriously entering TN politics, though hinted by him in the past, has enthused lakhs of his fans but there is little to suggest where his inclinations are at present, after years of

his voicing this or that politicians. Immediate positive reactions have been flowing from BJP Ministers at the Centre and leading cadres in Tamil Nadu. Both AIADMK factions have moved closer to BJP, whether for political or administrative reasons, so much so that Mr Panneerselvam, after meeting the Prime Minister indicated the possibility of alliance with BJP in the long-deferred Tamil Nadu civic polls which should take place within a few months. One would hope the factions do not overlook who and what made AIADMK.

For Amit Shah, President of BJP, it would be welcome if Mr Rajnikanth decides to enter politics but it would be upto him to make the choice and BJP doors are always open for him. Senior BJP Ministers have referred to the superstar's close association with the Prime Minister and they noted his wide support base in the State, which would add strength to the party in the State. BJP has been trying over the last decade to build a political space for itself but without success. Given his perceived leanings toward the saffron party, some of political observers consider it likely that the superstar might provide the public face for the party desperately trying to entrench itself in Tamil Nadu. But, other observers feel, Mr Rajnikanth would not let his individual identity get submerged and may float his own party. There are no reactions from either of the two AIADMK factions nor anything speculative from Mr Stalin. In the past Mr Rajnikanth had once spoken out against Mr. Jayalalithaa (1996) but later patched up and he distanced himself from politics.

Surely, if Mr Rajnikanth takes a plunge, seeking to change a murky scene, it could mean a major challenge to the bipolar Dravidian political order that has prevailed for decades, with all its credits (social empowerment and overall development) on one side and the abhorrence that corruption and other evils were built into the system, on the other. (IPA)



A float, decorated with a figure made of daffodil blossoms, participates in a parade during the daffodil festival (Narzissenfest) on Grundlsee lake in Grundlsee, Austria.

Interest in alternative to dollar

FOCUS

Arun Srivastava

Global fraternity gradually getting disillusioned and frustrated with the America's policy of hegemony and its economy always on the prowl to squeeze other economies, has been contemplating to put an end to its dollar hegemony by promoting a new currency to replace it.

In fact some of the countries have been interacting with others to evolve a consensus. A feeling has gripped these countries that America has been using this mechanism to keep them under its thumb. Recent activities and wild actions of American President has strengthened this feeling. They nurse the view that with Trump, their currencies may not gain strength. The US Federal Reserve System claims to influence and control the global economies, but the fact of the matter has been during last three decades it has miserably failed to provide a new dynamism to the international monetary system and control inflation. Almost all the world economies have been faced with the threat of survival. By and large the rating agencies have been under the control of the USA and obviously their

ratings are not up to mark. Their ratings of the economic condition and its feasibility is dependent on the ratings by these agencies. A couple of years back some of the countries had raised this issue but it did not catch the wider attention. The West has openly turned the rating agencies into instruments of economic war. The financial stability of China or Russia by far surpasses the stability of many western economies. It is beyond comprehension how the economics of some of the smaller countries could be better than Russia and China or even from India. The experience of Iceland having the highest ratings has been quite interesting. However, their ratings continued to be overstated up to the time when their liabilities were refused to be serviced. The monopoly of the West in this area was virtually lost when Dagong, a Chinese rating agency, was set up, but methodological problems remain unresolved. It's against this background that a consensus among the states that are being blackmailed by rating agencies is appearing. In the West it is supported by responsible financiers, who need effective

working instruments for risk management, and by masses of small investors. In fact some expert in the area of international finance, consultant to private and state-owned companies of China in the area of innovation policy and international contracts had also introduced idea of the 'dollar hegemony'. Nevertheless it did not gather momentum. But undeniably this has put the vulnerability of the dollar system in public domain. At the 2016 summit of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) this had featured but not so prominently. In India the issue to delink Rupee from Dollar was raised in 2008 in the wake of Lehman Bank turning bankrupt. If Euro and Pound can have their independent status, why cannot Rupee have? This discrimination must stop. The 2017 SPIEF on June 1 and 2 may discuss the possibility of facilitating the process of an

alternative currency to US dollar. The St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) is a unique event in the world of business and economics. SPIEF has been held since 1997, and since 2006, it has been held under the direct supervision of the President of the Russian Federation. This obviously underlined the political more than the economic importance of the Forum. Over the last 20 years, the Forum has become a leading global platform for representatives of the business community to meet and discuss the key economic issues facing Russia, emerging markets, and the world as a whole. The fundamental issues and trends affecting Russia, emerging economies, and the world are identified, analysed, and publicized. In 2017, the SPIEF overseas sessions include for the World Economic Forum in Davos (Switzerland), Boao Forum for Asia (China), Hannover Messe (Germany),

and business forums in Cuba and Italy. With Russian President Vladimir Putin himself monitoring the event, it is likely that the issue of Dollar Hegemony would feature once again. Russia has still been under American sanction and it would assert in a more forceful manner at the international level. There is also growing feeling that dollar system must go under reforms to suit to the global needs and demand. The American market has lost its trust in the government's political courage for taking a required strategy to sustain and also to provide a constant economic growth without any crises and inflation. The SPIEF may seek to know from China and Russia what role they can play in the prevailing political situation.

Some countries also nurse the feeling that the wind of change was blowing over the world and both Russia and China can take the initiative to emerge as the prospective leaders. As the Vietnam War failed to strengthen the American economy, the current global war against terrorism will only weaken the US economy without improving the US national security. (IPA)

QUICK CROSSWORD 1578

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20

- Across**
1. Ten raced (anag) (8)
6. Follies (4)
7. Scooped (6)
9. Nab (5)
11. Inoculation fluid (5)
12. Tusk substance (5)
13. Memorise (5)
16. Tooth coating (6)
18. Short skirt (4)
19. Providing food and drink (8)
- Down**
1. Faulty (9)
2. Cakes' leaf (5)
3. Mark correct (4)
4. Alleviate (7)
5. Compete (3)
8. Taxing (9)
10. Fired clay article (7)
14. Accused's defence (5)
15. Deflated (4)
17. Pen end (3)

Previous solution
Across: 6. Shoemaking, 8. Dingo, 10. Agape, 13. Abracadabra, 14. Theb, 17. Dowel, 19. Groundless. Down: 1. Shun, 2. Bery, 3. Lava, 4. Diva, 5. Agreeable, 7. Advantage, 9. Grade, 11. Guano, 12. Vat, 15. Book, 16. Tuna, 17. Dull, 18. Wasp.

SUDOKU: 1865

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

Yesterday's Solution 1864

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

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