

**When you go into court you are putting your fate into the hands of twelve people who aren't smart enough to get out of jury duty**  
*Norm Crosby*

## Privatizing the railways

The talk was on the air for quite some time that the Government wants to privatize the Railways. Now it is official. In an interview to The Hindu, Railway Minister Piyush Goyal has confirmed that the Government wants to "give operations of railway lines to private players for enhancing competition." The Minister did not clarify competition with whom, the Indian Railways are wholly owned by the Government of India. Inviting private players to operate railway lines for "competition" can mean only one thing—that the Government wants private players to compete against itself. This seems self-contradictory but, well, there is the Minister's comment.

The Railway Minister has gone on to say that the Government intends to 'lease out' at least a hundred railway stations to private players. An earlier attempt for leasing out stations, he said, evoked 'lukewarm response' from the private sector. This time, to make the leasing more attractive, the Government has decided to increase the lease period from 45 to 99 years. Private operators who take the lease will be allowed to 'sub-lease' stations to others for increasing their investment value and mortgaging assets to enable banks to give low-cost funds. The Minister has not clarified what will be the process of sub-leasing and whether the Government will have a say in it or the sub-lessees will be chosen by the lessees according to their sweet will. Private parties operating railway tracks and taking over railway stations seem to be the first step to privatizing the railways. This fits in with the economic philosophy of the present government which is understood to be interested in privatizing the banking sector as well.

If the Government hands over the railway tracks and stations to private operators, then it will be able to wash its hands clean of any responsibility for railway accidents and paying compensation to the kith and kin of the dead and the injured. The Government has not clarified the eligibility criteria for the private parties who will make bids for operating tracks and stations. This becomes more important if the lessees are allowed to bring in sub-lessees. The Railways are the lifeline of the nation, carrying goods and passengers through its huge network spread across the length and breadth of this vast country. Handing over the Railways to private operators, whether gradually, step by step, or at one go, will be detrimental to the interests of the country. The Government should think many times and seek the opinion of specialists before taking a final decision.

# Muslim personal board's speak on triple talaq

## REFLEX ACTION

L.S. Herdenia

All India Muslim Personal Board after its two-day meet here seems to have chosen the policy of non-confrontation with the government or judiciary on the issue of triple talaq. Reiterating its well-known stand of no interference in matters of Shariah, the Board gave a call for reform to end the practice of instant triple talaq. The Board adopted a novel method to refute the Supreme Court's claim that the majority of Muslim women are against triple talaq. It organised an exclusive meet of Muslim women in an open maiden where several women speakers and also some members of the Board stated: "Triple talaq is bad but effective under certain circumstances, dilution in Sharia will lead to abandonment of women after divorce".

AIMPLB women wing president Dr Asma Zehra said, "The Muslim Personal Law remains intact after the Supreme Court decision over triple talaq as the decision has banned instant triple talaq." Dr. Zehra further said that though the board respects the apex court verdict, it is compelled to say that it is not as per the board because it violates the basic rights provided by the Constitution of India to all faiths and religions to live life as per their religious beliefs. She said that as the issue is related with women, countrywide conventions would be organized by men and women well-versed with Shariah to educate the community. In every convention a resolution would be passed stating that Muslim men and women believe in Islamic Shariah and talaq is part of Islamic Shariah.

"The ban on talaq is depriving us of our fundamental right; hence the freedom provided to us by the Constitution to practice Shariah should be continued. This resolution signed by the attendants of the conventions would be sent to President of India, Prime Minister, Chief Justice of India, Women Commission and Law Commission", she added. Dr. Zehra, along with AIMPLB president Maulana Rabey Hasan Nadvi, Maulana Rabey Hasan Nadvi, Maulana Sajjad Nomani, Bhopal Shahar Qazi Syed Mushtaq Ali

Nadwi and others, then read the resolution before the gathering and asked the crowd whether they believed in Shariah and in response hundreds of women present on the occasion raised their hands to express their consent and uttered Allah ho Akbar. AIMPLB's first executive committee meeting after the Supreme Court verdict over triple talaq was held here on Sunday.

The meeting decided that a committee will be formed to study the verdict in detail and find a solution to the conflict between the judgment and Shariah. Besides, the board made it clear that it would not tolerate any interference in Muslim Personal Law and gave a call for social boycott of those who practice instant triple talaq. The meeting was perhaps the largest gathering of Muslim women ever held in Bhopal. An estimated 10,000 women attended the event, which continued for three hours. The gathering was first addressed by women representatives of AIMPLB - Mamduha Majid, Sabiha Sahiba and Dr Asma Zehra. In the process adopted by AIMPLB prior to the SC verdict, a signature campaign was launched in Bhopal. Muslim women signed on a document saying that they welcome the Supreme Court verdict, and that "Talaq is a part of Shariah and any ban of the practice would adversely impact women's rights. Therefore, any changes in personal law should not take place".

Mamduha Majid said, "Not just women, men need to be educated, too. Simply wearing a topi (skull cap) and having a beard does not make a person an expert in Islamic law. There are a lot of misconceptions that have impacted women's rights. All this needs to be

addressed and the AIMPLB is working towards it." At the board's executive meet on Sunday, the consensus was for reforms in the community to discourage instant triple talaq. The board decided to constitute a committee to advise on the process and the method for undertaking reforms. It will encourage religious leaders to spread the word against instant triple talaq. Zafaryab Jilani, a member of AIMPLB and counsel for the board, while addressing media persons said that the committee to deliberate on the issue will have lawyers and religious scholars, who will scrutinize the verdict from the legal as well as Islamic perspective. The committee will submit its detailed report to the board in ten days' time based on which the board will take the future course of action. AIMPLB refuted the observation made by the Supreme Court that since triple talaq is sinful, it can't be lawful. The personal law board further claimed that they will continue to practise Shariah, which provided for instant triple talaq.

"Nullification of triple talaq is a very small part of the verdict. We follow Shariat and Shariat provides for instant triple talaq. We believe in triple talaq and it must and will go on. The fact remains that whoever still practices triple talaq will still continue to sever ties with his wife and it will not change. How to implement it is a headache of the court and government," said Rahmani. AIMPLB member Khalid Rashid Firangi Maili said, "We are now jotting down the various interpretations of the constitutional articles involved in the verdict. We have also decided that the struggle we have been waging since the last several decades to discourage the practice of instant talaq will continue. Syed Jalaluddin Umri, secretary of the AIMPLB, said, "In a democracy, we cannot oppose the verdict of the court, but we cannot welcome it. We have to safeguard our personal laws. The court thinks by this verdict they will save women. I am yet to understand how it will happen." (IPA)



A Durga puja pandal is being decorated ahead of the puja in New Delhi on Monday.

# Gauri Lankesh murdered for ideology

The ghoulish glee expressed in the celebratory tweets put out by Hindu "patriots" over the journalist Gauri Lankesh's murder in Bengaluru, underlines the insane hatred against what a saffronite calls "Leftist, Naxal sympathizer, anti-establishment and anti-Hindu" people.

Although assassination of political adversaries is not the monopoly of the Hindu Right, it is doubtful if the killers identified with, say, the Maoists or the CPI(M) or any other party would have gloated over their "achievement" as the saffron lobby has done, although there is a Marxist minister in Kerala, MM Mani, who openly boasted in 2012 how his party had eliminated its political opponents. But the abusive tweets against critics have come to be associated in recent years mainly with the Hindutva camp. To make matters worse, it has now come to light that none other than Prime Minister Modi himself pursues these outpourings of hate on his Twitter timeline, although the BJP has quickly pointed out that reading such material does not mean giving a character certificate to the

writer. What the non-partisan observer might have expected, however, was that Narendra Modi would come out strongly against such scurrilous writings just as he once wanted the parents of adolescents to discipline their boys, too, and not only the girls. Since few in positions of authority have spoken out unambiguously against the venomous content of the tweets, the disgraceful propensity of the writers has been spreading like wild fire.

It is only after the noxious tweets on the journalist's murder became widely known that the Union law minister, Ravi Shankar Prasad, criticized the trolls only to be criticized in return by the latter. The riposte made the minister change his tune by asking why those who are "rightly angry" over the journalist's murder were silent over the killings of the RSS workers in Kerala. While the deaths in Kerala, as in West Bengal in the 1960s, are part of a vicious cycle of inter-party violence in which both sides suffer, Gauri Lankesh's assassination, like those of Narendra Dhabolkar, Govind Pansare and MM Kalburgi, are targeted killings carried out

either by party cadres or contract killers against ideological opponents. What the assassinations of this nature underline is a fascistic rejection of dissenting voices. The singling out of critics for elimination is not only meant to silence one person, but also to send a message to all dissenters that unless they hold their tongue, or put away their pens and laptops, they may not survive. It is obvious that such carefully planned tactics of intimidation and murder which are intended to drive fear into the hearts of those who oppose a given ideological line cannot be the handiwork of isolated individuals, whether derailed or acting in concert with a few others. As the deaths of Dhabolkar and others over several years show, there is an organization which is behind the killings, which is not short of funds and indoctrinated

## FOCUS

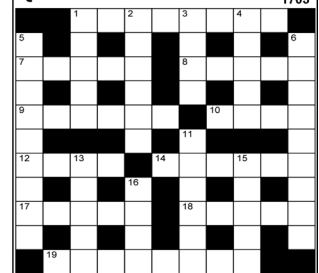
Amulya Ganguli

members willing to take the risk of detection and legal punishment. At the same time, as none of the killers has yet been caught, it would appear that they enjoy the protection of an effective support system which, in turn, must have been built up over years and is capable of providing secure hideouts where the killers can stay till the storm blows over. There is little doubt that these assassins are different from, say, the gaurskshaks who are also ideologically motivated but act at random, often in full view of cameras. The Supreme Court's orders, therefore, for stern action against them are likely to yield results. Besides, they do not seem to enjoy the overt support of the saffron establishment. As such, they are more vulnerable at present than before. But the killers of those who are perceived as "anti-Hindu" belong to a different category. As the

tweets in their favour show, they operate in a favourable ecosystem where they feel that they are on the right path. Such psychotic groups have existed for a long time. Before the advent of the social media, they used to send "hate mail" to the anti-Hindus, usually in handwritten postcards or letters in envelopes. It was customary for them not only to advise their targeted opponents to go to Pakistan, but also make vulgar allusions to their female relatives.

An intense anti-Muslim sentiment is the distinguishing feature of these foul-mouthed groups. Any interaction with the less sophisticated followers of the BJP will reveal their deep animus towards the minorities. Unlike in the days of the hate mail, they are not only abusive, but also flaunt a distorted version of ancient and modern Indian history which depicts the Muslims in the darkest of hues. As is known, these elements have always been there. The only difference between the earlier decades and the present is that they have been emboldened beyond measure by the BJP's ascent to power. (IPA)

## QUICK CROSSWORD 1705



- Across**  
1. Bitterness, ill feeling (8)  
7. Map book (5)  
8. Outsider (5)  
9. Move slowly and idly (6)  
10. Legend (4)  
12. Coax (4)  
14. Mooring cable (6)  
17. Long, cliff-bound sea inlet (5)  
18. Object (5)  
19. Grounded (anag) (8)
- Down**  
1. Let (5)  
2. Consequence (6)  
3. Honey drink (4)  
4. Raucous (5)  
5. Manacles (9)  
6. Mooring (9)  
11. Ran suddenly, rapidly (6)  
13. Cultivated (5)  
15. Oscillate (5)  
16. Slight advantage (4)

**Previous solution**  
Across: 1. Birdseed, 6. Late, 7. Gossip, 9. Ether, 11. Queer, 12. Index, 13. Hedge, 16. Affair, 18. ToFu, 19. Diagonal.  
Down: 1. Ballerina, 2. Retch, 3. Edgy, 4. Dispute, 5. Lei, 8. Perpetual, 10. Emerald, 14. Drown, 15. Area, 17. Fee.

## SUDOKU: 1986

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## Yesterday's Solution 1985

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

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