

Be not ashamed of thy virtues, honor's a good brooch to wear in a man's hat at all times
Ben Jonson

PM should assert himself

A day after civil society came out on the streets across India to register its protest against lynching and targeting the minorities and dalits, the Prime Minister gave an impassioned speech at Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad, condemning lynching and warning gau rakshaks that nobody would be allowed to take the law in their own hands in the name of cow protection. He had made such speeches earlier also but these had had no effect on the cow vigilantes. The same day that the PM made his speech, a man was lynched in Jharkhand. The mindset of the vigilante groups has not changed and is not likely to change, the Prime Minister's fervent appeal notwithstanding.

More words will not do. What is required—and required urgently—is action, strong and exemplary action against the wrong-doers—action that is visible to fringe elements and the people alike. Once people come to believe that the self-appointed gau rakshaks do not enjoy official patronage, they will get the courage to oppose those who are doing this outrage. Modi's Sabarmati speech does not seem to have gone well with the zealots. The Jharkhand lynching shows that no appeal from even the highest of the land is going to change the mindset of the bigoted and the fanatic.

The root of the problem goes much deeper. Someone who has been indoctrinated in an ideology of hatred and intolerance in the formative years of his life cannot unlearn what he has learnt. His mind is not a tabula rasa on which new ideas and ideologies can be imprinted. They cannot change. But the State and the society have to prevent him from wrongdoing and 'taking the law in his own hands.' These elements will remain unresponsive to any appeal, even if it comes from the highest of the land. The Jharkhand lynching has shown that the Prime Minister's appeal, like those he made earlier, has fallen on deaf ears. Now the State will have to act and act decisively so that no one is left in any doubt that the Government means business.

Beijing's outbursts against India

REFLEX ACTION

Barun Das Gupta

It is the same old story. Media reports Chinese incursion across Indian border; some videos are shown. The Indian army denies any incursion took place. As on previous occasions, China 'warns' India to withdraw its troops from the territory which the Chinese claim is theirs. New Delhi plays it cool. Even the exact date and time of the face-off are not given. It all creates a feeling of déjà vu. It happened so many times during the UPA regime; it is now happening during the NDA rule.

But something did happen recently in the Sikkim border. The media did not invent it. And it happened at a time when Prime Minister Modi was meeting President Donald Trump and there was expectation that India would strike a big deal with Washington in the defence field. Already, an agreement has been reached with Lockheed Martin to make the deadly F-15 fighter aircraft in India in collaboration with Tata. It is a highly manoeuvrable supersonic plane. It will be added to the fleet of Russian Sukhoi 30 MKI of the IAF. China cannot but feel uneasy. It may not also be entirely fortuitous that China has, at the same time, taken strong exception to India establishing a dedicated freight air corridor with Afghanistan bypassing Pakistan. Islamabad so far has not reacted but Beijing has. The organ of the Chinese Communist Party, The Global Times, has said the air corridor shows 'India's stubborn geopolitical thinking.' It has questioned India's intention: does India intend to bypass Pakistan to develop trade with Afghanistan and other Central Asian countries? But the CCP organ has not explained what is there in the Indian move that impinges adversely on Beijing's interests. Meanwhile, the Trump administration has come out emphatically in support of India vis-à-vis Pakistan-sponsored terrorism. It has called the Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jamat-ud-Dawa as terrorist outfits and named Nazir Ahmed Chaudhry and Muhammad Hussein Gill as 'specially designated global terrorists'.

Pakistan-based Kashmiri militant outfit Hizbul Mujahideen leader Salauddin has also been declared a global terrorist. Surely, this is a marked departure from Washington's past policy towards Pakistan, which was one of giving indulgence to a spoilt child. Pakistan can hardly expect any indulgence any longer from the Trump administration as far as terrorism is concerned. No doubt, this is a diplomatic victory for India.

But China has other reasons, too, for getting worried. By now several of its neighbours have got wise to Beijing's policy of economic domination and settling Chinese population in other countries. In Pakistan, for example, China has bought huge tracts of land along the CPEC where Chinese labourers are working. There is a fear that eventually these people will be settled there, adversely affecting the place's demographic balance. Last December, The Nation of Pakistan reported that "Given the current rate of influx of Chinese nationals into Balochistan and after completion of the CPEC the native population of the area will be outnumbered by 2048." This is old Chinese tactics. The Chinese are building big projects in Sri Lanka and Myanmar. Unable to repay the debt capital cost to the Chinese, Colombo has been forced to sell huge stakes of the Hambantota port project to the Chinese to lighten the debt burden. Myanmar is another country which finds itself in China's debt-trap. It could not pay back the cost of several big projects built by China, like a deep-sea port in the Bay of Bengal. It has now no alternative other than to sell

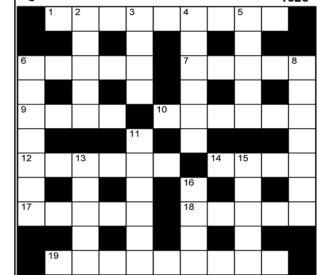
majority stakes of these projects to Chinese companies. Thailand also has a problem with China. A multibillion dollar railway project has been all but stalled. The Chinese and Thai authorities have sharp differences over its funding and feasibility. Thailand is insisting on technology transfer by China which Beijing is in no mood to agree to. Through all these, the contours of a Chinese brand of neo-colonialism are becoming sharper. Beijing fears that the alienation of these countries from China may draw them closer to India.

China is trying its best to build up a huge navy that can dominate the Indian Ocean Region and the Asia-Pacific Region. This is a strong challenge to India, which has a coastline of 7,500 kms. It has to protect the commercial sea-lanes passing through the Indian Ocean. India was aware of the Chinese challenge early and an ambitious naval project codenamed 'Project Seabird' was conceived. It was set up at Karwar in Karnataka on the western seaboard. After the completion of phase IB of the project, the base will be able to harbour 50 frontline warships and will be the biggest naval base east of the Suez Canal. More recently, India has entered into an agreement with Seychelles to set up its first overseas military base. It will be a naval base developed jointly by India and Seychelles, an island country in the Indian Ocean comprising 15 big and small islands. The Indian naval base will be in the tiny (4.5 sq. miles) Assumption Island in Outer Seychelles, north of Madagascar. A powerful radar system will also be set up. It will gather vital intelligence and assist in surveillance operations. Modi and Trump have announced that India, US and Japan will hold the 'largest maritime exercise ever conducted in the Indian Ocean' next month. China has reasons to worry. India should anticipate more incursions, big and small, like the recent one in Sikkim, anywhere in the long Sino-Indian border. (IPA)



Girls offering puja on the occasion of Gauri Vrat in Ahmedabad on Tuesday.

QUICK CROSSWORD 1626



- Across**
1. Right at sea (9)
6. Rifle (anag) (5)
7. Wharf (5)
9. Bare (4)
10. Harmony (6)
12. Slatted window (6)
14. Indian garment (4)
17. Submit (5)
18. Sorceress (5)
19. Wild and exciting (9)
- Down**
2. Bronze placing (5)
3. Uncommon (4)
4. Protest (6)
5. Proportion (5)
6. At last! (7)
8. Jewish vernacular (7)
11. Spanning structure (6)
13. Turn upside down (5)
15. Amend (5)
16. Study assiduously (4)

Previous solution
Across: 1. Fairness, 7. Equip, 8. Clown, 9. Overdo, 10. Glut, 12. Role, 14. Malign, 17. Macho, 18. Ideal, 19. Peter out.
Down: 1. Fluke, 2. Impede, 3. Nice, 4. Spoil, 5. Velodrome, 6. Instantly, 11. Gallico, 13. Luce, 15. Inept, 16. Joke.

Multiplying problems for MP CM

FOCUS

L.S. Herdedia

There is no respite for Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister. Even as he was trying to sort out the problem created by the unexpected flood of onions into the procurement centres set up by the government, a series of suicides by farmers in the state has become a matter of serious concern.

More than 30 farmers have committed suicide in June and a majority of these came after June 10, the day on which farmers' agitation was suspended. The suicides have washed away the tall claims of the state government that farming has become profitable in MP. Looking at the seriousness of the issue, the State Human Rights Commission has asked the state government to explain the causes behind the suicidal deaths. The MPRHC has issued four notices over different incidents of farmers' death and suicides in MP in the past 22 days. But it has not received the reply to a single notice so far. Taking cognizance of the police firing, resulting in death of five farmers in Mandasaur district, MPRHC issued notices to the state government and sought a report. The commission constituted a two-member bench for hearing on the issue and sought replies by June 23 from chief secretary, DGP, district collector and SP Mandasaur. But the responses are yet to be received. Left with

no option, the MPRHC has now issued reminders to the officials concerned for their reports so that it can decide its future course of action. Other farmers' death-related incidents in which MPRHC has sought reports, but is waiting for replies, include suicide by three farmers in Hoshangabad, Narsinghpur and Sagardistrict allegedly due to loan sharks, not getting compensation on time and related issues. MPRHC has also asked collector and SP Hoshangabad for a detailed report on the farmers' suicide and the steps district administration took to check such incidents.

The commission also inquired whether compensation was paid before or after the farmers' death and how many such cases are still pending. The most shocking aspect of these suicides is that not a single minister or leader of the ruling party took the trouble of meeting the families of those who committed suicide. Even the officers did not do so. On the contrary, statements were issued claiming that in most of the cases, farm debt was not the cause of the suicides. Apart from the farmers' suicides, the state government has been encountering serious difficulty in handling the problem arising out of purchasing and storing onion. The government

hurriedly launched the drive to buy onions at a minimum support price of Rs 8 per kg, but is now finding itself trapped with no takers for the onions procured. Special trains carrying tonnes of onions across Madhya Pradesh are getting no takers, forcing officials to request the government to stop sending the special trains. So far 12,000 metric tonnes of onion has already reached Betul, 200 kms away from Bhopal, where the officials are finding it difficult to handle the produce. District supply officer PS Mujalde told media that he had written to the government not to send any more onion trains. ML Choudhary, manager of the district unit of the civil supplies corporation, has also written to the government that onion is not required in Betul. Another train carrying onions is waiting at Itarsi for onward journey to Betul. At Harpalpur railway station of Chhattarpur, tonnes of onions are decaying on the platform. The terrible stench emanating is discomfiting passengers. The special train carrying the onion had reached the station three days ago. More

than 2,000 metric tonnes of onion offloaded from the train is decaying. Government sources conceded that there was no planning in the transportation of onion purchased from the farmers. Chairman of the MP civil supplies corporation Hitesh Bajpal admitted a big challenge in handling the onion transportation. Reports of huge stocks of onions rotting at various places are reaching Bhopal. Observers feel the decision to purchase onions should have been taken earlier. The procurement began when monsoon rains were round the corner. There is not enough space to store purchased onion. Meanwhile several organisations claiming to be well-wishers of farmers have announced their programmes for agitation; some of them have decided to undertake 'yatras'. There is every possibility that the competition among farmers' unions may spoil the cause of peasants. Amid these problems, the chief minister found himself trapped in a political storm when the election of his cabinet colleague Dr Narottam

Mishra was declared null and void. He was found guilty of sponsoring paid news during the elections held in 2008. Dr. Mishra, who held the department of public relations, is regarded as Chauhan's confidante. He was also the spokesman of cabinet since 2013. Incidentally Mishra is the second public relations minister facing allegations of misconduct. The first was Laxmikant Sharma, who too was very close to Chauhan and enjoyed enormous power, but was found involved in the Vyapam scandal and had to spend more than a year in prison. Mishra was accused of bribing journalists during the 2008 elections. A complaint was made against him by the losing candidate, Rajendra Bharti of Congress.

The moment the Election Commission declared him guilty of 'paid news' opposition parties demanded his resignation both from the ministry as well as from the Vidhan Sabha. Meanwhile, Mishra has appealed to the state High Court challenging the Election Commission's decision. According to the commission's decision, he not only ceases to be a legislator but has been debarred from contesting election for three years, which means that he cannot contest the next election to the Vidhan Sabha due for next year. (IPA)

SUDOKU: 1907

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Yesterday's Solution 1906

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