

A nation is a society united by delusions about its ancestry and by common hatred of its neighbors
William Ralph Inge

Hooliganism

What is happening in the name of opposing the Padmavat film across West and North India is organized hooliganism motivated by reasons other than the supposed hurt the film has caused to Rajput sentiment. Those who are indulging in widespread vandalism in the BJP-ruled States are going scot-free because the concerned State Governments and the Union Government have chosen to look the other way. The aim is to work up a mass hysteria to consolidate the Hindutva vote bank before the coming State Assembly elections and the Lok Sabha poll. The image of the BJP as the ruling party has lost a lot of its sheen in the last four years. The people are realizing that the promises made to them have not been fulfilled and are not going to be fulfilled in the foreseeable future. Hence the necessity of creating some other issue around which the people can be mobilized and political support for the ruling establishment assured.

What began as a show of anger against supposed disrespect to the Hindu queen Padmavati in the film has now been transformed into challenging the authority of the Union Government, the CBFC and even the Supreme Court. The role of the State Governments is one of passive complicity. Hurt Rajput sentiments cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be the cause of attacking a school bus carrying children. But this is what has happened in Haryana which has already seen about half a dozen cases of rape and murder in the last few days. If this is madness, there is a method in it. The total inaction of the State Governments concerned only confirms the suspicion that there is more in the protest against a film than meets the eye.

A very dangerous precedent is being created. A few hundred hoodlums and goons are holding the State to ransom and disrupting civil life, with the State choosing to remain a passive spectator. In a democratic society where the rule of law prevails, some institutions are held sacred, like the Supreme Court. Challenging the authority of the Supreme Court and getting away with it with perfect impunity, corrodes the foundation of a democratic polity. That Sanjay Leela Vanshali had to write to the Karni Sena requesting it to let his film be screened in public theatres despite its clearance by the CBFC shows the helplessness both of the citizen and the State. The ruling party and the State Governments run by it are acquiescing in the lawlessness without a thought for the future. Having tasted blood, these hoodlums may someday turn against them as well.

Netanyahu's India visit

REFLEX ACTION

Arun Srivastava

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to India has of course helped India and Israel to normalise their bilateral ties, but more than that it has facilitated Netanyahu to buttress his image back in his country. It is significant that Netanyahu chose to visit India when Israeli people had hit the streets of Tel Aviv demanding his ouster.

From the very beginning Netanyahu knew that a strong relation with India would help him earn laurels and convince his countrymen that he is the only politician who can lead the nation. It was not without reason that he came to India along with the largest business delegation that has ever accompanied an Israeli premier on an overseas tour. He was aware that entering into strategic relationship with an important global power will help him defuse the crisis and erase the stigma of his being corrupt. A closer look at what he said before embarking on the visit will make his intentions clear. He had said: "we are strengthening ties between Israel and this important global power. This serves our security, economic, trade and tourism interests, as well as many other areas. This is a great blessing for the state of Israel. Indian Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi is a close friend of Israel and of mine and I appreciate the fact that he will accompany me on extensive parts of my visit. On this visit I intend to strengthen bilateral relations even more. This visit is an opportunity to enhance cooperation with a global economic, security, technology and tourism power".

Netanyahu led a high-profile delegation having 130 businessmen from 102 Israeli companies. Israel will be investing \$8.6 billion to boost cooperation with India in tourism, technology, agriculture and innovation over a period of four years. Even while Netanyahu was in India, protestors were on the streets in Tel Aviv. They were objecting to the design to bring a legislation to protect Netanyahu from investigation. The legislation would block

Israel's police from publishing findings and issuing recommendations to the prosecutor's office on indictments related to public officials. His critics allege that the changes would only serve to keep the public in the dark on criminal investigations of Netanyahu. Netanyahu is suspected in two corruption cases; first, known as Case 1000 and second Case 2000.

Incidentally, police has already interrogated Netanyahu on the suspicion of receiving illicit gifts worth thousands of dollars from Arnon Milchan, an Israeli billionaire. Netanyahu has been questioned "under caution" in both the grafts and the Mozes cases and obviously the police initiative suggests that this time there is suspicion of a criminal offence. Corruption scandals are nothing new for Netanyahu. For the past five years, he has been mired in allegations ranging from the double billing of travel expenses to receiving illegal contributions. Prime Minister Narendra Modi accorded a red-carpet reception to Netanyahu, but the fact cannot be ignored that Netanyahu has lost much of his image and the support amongst the Israeli people. His coalition is beginning to fragment. Even his coalition partners are not too willing to defend him.

"We asked the ministers to defend the Prime Minister, but each of them is making his own political calculations," observed David Bitan, the coalition chair man. Modi's reception to Netanyahu also makes his claim of zero tolerance towards corruption suspect. How could a person

like Modi extend such a welcome for Netanyahu? Just recall his campaign against former prime minister Dr Manmohan Singh. Modi was aware that a person like Manmohan Singh would not stoop so low; but he continued to defame him. In the process he projected himself as the only clean politician in India while portraying others as corrupt.

This has happened in the backdrop of a perception: "Netanyahu did not go to India to distract attention from problems at home. But if those problems are overshadowed as a result of the trip, then for Netanyahu, that would be a most welcome side-effect". His involvement in corruption cases has been an open secret and even the Israeli media last month had planned instituting a formal trial against Netanyahu in both the cases. The usual refrain in favour of renewing relations with Israel has been: since it is close to America, India is also ready to embrace it. But this is not the fact. The Sangh Parivar holds that like Hindu marriage, the relationship between India and Israel was solemnised in the heaven. Its implications are obvious. Sangh says: "they are made for each other". It makes it amply clear that the Sangh sturdy likes to embrace Israel, which shares and endorses Sangh's Hindutva and Hindu philosophy. Else, there is no other reason that India should hug Israel so tightly, that too when its leadership is facing serious charges.

It is worth recalling that the Modi-Netanyahu meeting in July 2017 had brushed aside the Israel-Palestine peace process. Interestingly, the joint statement issued on Monday in New Delhi "reaffirmed their support for an early resumption of peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians". This is a strategic shift and indicates that Modi and Netanyahu had reworked on the issue. Nevertheless, Modi ought to realise the calamitous impact his move will have on the Indian societal relations and also its standing in the international geo-political arena. (IPA)



Afghan boys slide down a snow-covered slope in Kabul, Afghanistan—REUTERS

Conventional Crossword									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
9						10			
11					12	13			
			14	15					
			16			17			
18	19	20							
			21			22		23	
24	25	26				27		28	
29						30			
31							32		

- | ACROSS | DOWN |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Very provocative | 1 Disguise |
| 5 Small boat | 2 Also |
| 9 Whole | 3 Impassive |
| 10 Fish eggs | 4 Roofing item |
| 11 Object of worship | 5 Time of the year |
| 12 Awry | 6 Annoy |
| 14 Smallest amount | 7 Enrmy |
| 15 Young males | 8 Less in number |
| 19 Faculty head | 13 Eyelid affliction |
| 21 Advantage | 15 Mistle ashamed |
| 24 Planet | 17 Literary ridicule |
| 27 Sunny | 20 Navy |
| 28 Period of time | 20 Consume |
| 30 Mill course | 22 Satisfiers |
| 31 Lukewarm | 23 Make fun of |
| 32 Prophet | 25 Part of the verb 'to |
| | 26 Sharp blow |
| | 28 Born |

SUDOKU: 2100

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

Yesterday's Solution 2099

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

Yesterday's Cross Word Solution 108

O	U	T	L	E	T	H	O	W
P	O	E	V	A	D	E		
E	N	T	I	C	E	R	E	D
R	I	O	T	S	A	P	S	
A	L	T	E	R	G			
		R	H	I	R	E	S	
R	A	S	H	T	O	L	L	
R	U	M	O	R	A	C	L	E
P	E	N	E	Y	E	L	E	T

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Preferred and appropriate

FOCUS

Sushil Kutty

It was a gritty court saga out in the open. For the journalist a seemingly impossible heist given to him on a platter even if the limelight was for the four judges alone. But at the end of the day, the January 12 press conference turned out to be an exercise in futility. Nothing changed even after the beans were spilled. Justices Chelameswar, Ranjan Gogoi, Madan Lokur and Kurian Joseph stuck their neck out, and for what?

The Judge Loya case - what prompted the puisne judges to hold the unprecedented presser - went to a bench without any of them on it. And now any Tom, Dick and Harry could leave a comment on happenings in the Supreme Court and get away with it. It could not be that the press conference was to invite intervention from people at large, definitely not. But it did pave the way for politicians and political parties to fish in already muddied waters.

As it happened, within minutes of the four senior judges going public, CPI leader D Raja's car, with him in it, was cruising streets in the vicinity of Justice Chelameswar's Tuglak Road residence. And late that evening,

Congress President Rahul Gandhi asked for a probe into Judge Loya's "mysterious" death. Wouldn't that be seen as pre-empting a Supreme Court decision because the two petitioners in the case were demanding just that, a probe? The allegation that the Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra was misusing his "master of the roster" power to allot cases to "preferred benches" was linked to the Loya case. But post the presser, the case has not gone to a "preferred bench" of the four judges but to an "appropriate bench" of the CJJ choice. Now, if that was not poetic justice, what is? Justice Arun Mishra who, with Justice Mohan Shantnagoudar, heard the case on January 16 did not have to recuse himself. The case was taken out of his hand as he knew it would be. Was it coincidence that the "appropriate bench" turned out that of the CJJ? If anything the presser accomplished, it was to complete the circle. What can be better than a "preferred bench"? The answer is an "appropriate bench".

Talking of appropriate, the jury is still out on whether the decision to hold the presser was appropriate or not. Opinion has been divided: Courageous and

brave, even needless bravado. Dolts and the dumb and the dumber now know what puisne means - a judge inferior in rank to the chief justice. And a preferred bench carries with it the connotation that it could be an inferior bench. A petitioner at the end of 25 years of litigation, at the final threshold, would be on tenterhooks, worried whether his fate would be decided by a bench of seniors steeped in wisdom or juniors markedly inferior, for like the man said, "after the Supreme Court, only the Almighty, and that only when counted among the departed!"

The presser has been linked to the festering question of selection of judges and the independence of the judiciary. Political overtones and executive interference have coloured the narrative. The presser gave chance to all these to interplay, prompting media butterflies and legal genius to give

their two pence's worth. Certificates of the impeccable character of the four judges were waved even as that for the CJJ was waved, dismissed with the feeling, what good would that do? Everybody knew the CJJ, the kind of man he was, no need to discuss and dissect.

A couple of years ago a CJJ wiped tears off his eyes as he stood at a podium and lamented the shortage of judges in the judiciary, and how it was a burden the judiciary could not shake off for the love of mic! The tears were shed in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi compelling him to speak when he was not scheduled to address. But two years hence, the shortage of judges has remained a matter to tear apart with the Supreme Court itself short of judges by a headcount of six. That was a CJJ's frustration spilling from his eyes. But a tearjerker that came after the

January 12 presser was of Justice Arun Mishra breaking down in front of his brother judges, apparently for being ruled and rendered incompetent at the presser. What makes one judge or more than one judge wiser than another or other judges? No number of impeccable character certificates can set out the difference between the one and other in terms of grey cells. Judges don't fill in applications to apply for the post, they do not sit down for a written test nor do they stand up for a viva voce; none of them is subjected to an intelligence quotient test; genius at the level of Supreme Court cannot be measured at the time and date maintained in the register at the gate of entry.

Sadly that is how seniors and juniors are broken down in the Supreme Court. The January 12 press conference broke these and other hidden secrets down for the hoi polloi and when the four judges are all retired and gone all that they will be remembered for will be that they made a brother judge cry. Unless, Justice Ranjan Gogoi, who he becomes CJJ, does what the four of them sought to accomplish with the unprecedented press conference on the lawn. (IPA)