

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

Containing China

It is not fortuitous that the 69th Republic Day of India is being celebrated at a time when ten member-countries of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) are meeting in Delhi – countries which will be guests of honour at the Republic Day celebrations. India is sending a message to two of her unfriendly neighbours – Pakistan and China – that she is not alone, that she has friends to turn to and depend upon. This demonstration of friendship comes at a time when China has already unilaterally claimed (as it always does) that the area where is bent on building a road is not in Bhutan but is very much Chinese territory. In August last year, India foiled China's attempt at building the road after days of eyeball to eyeball confrontation with Chinese troops. Eventually, withdraw the troops it had to as India made it clear that it would not buckle under Chinese military pressure. China is still smarting under this wound to her 'prestige'.

Apart from unilateral occupation of territories it claims is own, China is also trying to dominate her neighbours by bringing them under its economic control by giving them massive loans on high interest rates. Those who fall for the offers of help find in no time that they are in a debt trap and the only way out is to sell equities of the projects to the Chinese companies that are building these. Entering as a benevolent loan-giver, China ends up with becoming owners of vital projects built with its money in other lands. India is trying to compete with China in this field but finds itself hopelessly outmatched by China. India offers a loan assistance of \$4.5 billion to Bangladesh. Within days, China gives her a loan of \$24 billion – almost five times. The other alternative is to seek loans from the IBRD or the IMF but that loan, too, comes at a price which erodes the political sovereignty of the debtor countries.

In the circumstances, the ASEAN countries will have to increase their military and economic cooperation so as to face the challenge of China. India will have to play a pivotal role in this. India's military cooperation with Vietnam has already raised China's hackles. Both these countries want to explore for oil and minerals in the South China Sea which is very necessary for their economic development. And it is here that China stands as a road block by claiming the whole of the South China Sea and unilaterally constructing landing strips and other fortifications there. A coordinated policy of pressure and persuasion will be necessary to deal with China.

Little known Karni Sena's tantrums

REFLEX ACTION

Amulya Ganguli

Even as the gau rakshaks have yielded place in the media headlines to the Karni Sena, the latter's crusade against the screening of the Sanjay Leela Bhansali film, Padmavat, is giving a foretaste of what can be expected if and when India's present constitutional order is replaced – God forbid! – by Hindu Rashtra.

A few days ago, the BJP MLA from Balia in Uttar Pradesh, Surendra Singh, referred to the country's transition to a Hindu Rashtra in 2024 when only those Muslims will be allowed to stay who are able to integrate themselves into Hindu society and culture. But even while waiting for this transformation, it is possible to get a glimpse of the changed scenario post-2024 from the activities of the Karni Sena. Not surprisingly, heading the list of the expected changes is the elimination of existing institutions and their replacement by those in tune with the demands of the new age.

Where the Karni Sena is concerned, it is the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) which is likely to be axed since it has shown no hesitation in sanctioning a film which has aroused the ire of the Rajput community for the supposedly erroneous depiction of the life and times of their historical/mythical heroine, Padmavati or Padmini.

In a Hindu Rashtra, a censor board is only expected to approve of films which are in tune with the sentiments of the people, which are to be determined – khaap panchayat-style – by the orthodox among the majority community. No quarter will be given to the so-called artistic licence on the plea of allowing freedom of expression as sought by the deracinated left-liberals. But that's not all. Any deviation from this exacting standard of conformism where the feelings of the masses are concerned may be violently resisted in order to forewarn other film makers as well as

cinema hall owners against being too bold with their presentations of the past – or the present, for that matter. The role of the police in such a situation is likely to be largely quiescent since the law-enforcing agencies will know that the perpetrators of mayhem are not acting on their own, but are only giving vent to the anger of hot polloi which they also feel. In all probability, they are likely to be treated with kid-gloves and let off with only a mild reprimand.

Like the police, the judiciary, too, is unlikely to intervene in a manner which will put the blame on the activists and not be rate the institution which passed the film. In any event, the judiciary in a Hindu Rashtra cannot be quite different in its interpretation of the law from the one in a secular state. The reason why the Karni Sena, the gau rakshaks, the love jihadis and others belonging to the Hindu Right have come to the forepost-2014 and have been able to get away with their depredations is that a substantial section of the BJP thinks on the same lines as the legislator from Balia.

It is not only their antipathy towards the Muslims which distinguishes them from those who are not admirers of the Hindu Rashtra, but also their disdain for artistic freedom, which made them hound M.F. Husain into the country to his death in exile, and their distinctive interpretation of history which rejects the idea of a composite culture having evolved as a result of centuries of Hindu-Muslim interaction. Instead,

they see history only in terms of continuous conflict between the Hindus and the Muslim invaders, which can only be resolved in a civil war, as the Jan Sangh/BJP's founder, Syama Prasad Mookerjee predicted, as Tripura's governor Tathagata Roy has reminded us.

It is not only an anti-Muslim outlook or a unique view of history which mark out the BJP from the "secular" parties. Its reservations about the constitutional order are also known. As the RSS mouthpiece, Organizer said in 1948, "there is nothing Bharatiya about the constitution ... there is no mention of the unique constitutional development in ancient Bharat. Manu's laws were written long before Lycurgus of Sparta or Solon of Persia ... But to our constitutional pundits, that means nothing". Under pressure from the saffron lobby, the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government set up a commission under a former chief justice of India, MN Venkatachaliah, to review the constitution. In a memo to this body, the RSS said that the new constitution should mandate the formation of an all-powerful Guru Sabha which will oversee the functioning of the legislature, executive and judiciary. However, the Guru Sabha will not be constituted by elections on the basis of universal adult franchise, but by a restricted electoral college comprising the teachers of schools, colleges and universities.

The touching faith of the RSS in teachers was probably based on the belief that it would not take long for the project of the saffronization of education to brainwash the teachers into accepting the Hindutva worldview. However, Venkatachaliah's refusal to tamper with the basic structure of the constitution nipped the BJP-RSS project in the bud. But the threat from the Hindu Right to India's multicultural polity hasn't gone away. (IPA)



Fishermen walk on the shore of the Tisma lagoon wetland park in Masaya, Nicaragua--REUTERS

Going off the bend: Case of 'man of science'

You think you know the man – his cold efficiency and his investigative mind, a one-time no-nonsense top cop of a metropolis of hard-cases and white collar criminals with a yen for a dollar and a date. Then suddenly, when he is off-guard, or rather when you are off-guard, the man flips and leaves you staring with the classic "Since the man is seen on Earth he has always been a man" quote! What was that all about? Former Mumbai top cop and now junior HRD minister Dr Satyapal Singh, without warning or hint, surprised everybody last week by claiming that naturalist Charles Darwin's theory of evolution was scientifically wrong and should be booted out of school and college curriculums.

"No ancestor of man – Nana or Nani – had seen ape turn to man," Dr Singh told a meeting of Vaidiks in Aurangabad. "Darwin was scientifically wrong, his theory of evolution should be taken out of school and college curriculum." The Vaidiks did not question the JHRDM. They knew where he was

coming from, their bailiwick! Modi's HRD ministers, whoever they were in their other lives, do have a tendency to go off the bend with their weird theories on this and that, harking back to Vedic times, pronouncements worthy of hanging the hat on. And Dr Satyapal Singh, if he was saying that Darwin was a fraud, who were the Vaidiks to take him to court! But there were other folks at the meeting, notably skeptical journalists, who picked up the quote, ran with it and wore it down. Dr Satyapal Singh became the headline and his quote one of the more quotable quotes of the day. Congress leader Jairam Ramesh read of Darwin and Satyapal and promptly shot off a tweet which spoke of BJP leaders and their stock of the 'obscure'.

Well, Dr Satyapal Singh heard of Ramesh and his tweet. "I know 10 to 15 international scientists who agree with me. I got a list of their names," he told a group of students in Assam. "My ministry is prepared to hold an international seminar where these scientists can come and

tell us where they stand on this issue." By then Dr Singh and his conviction in the notion that Darwin's theory was wrong had caught the imagination of scientific circles. Over 2000 scientists signed a petition calling Singh's Darwin comments "simplistic, misleading and lacking in scientific basis".

"It is factually incorrect to state that the evolutionary principle has been rejected by the scientific community," the petition said. "On the contrary, every new discovery adds support to Darwin's insights. There is plentiful and undeniable evidence to the fact that humans and the other great apes and monkeys had a common ancestor." That set the cat among the pigeons and Dr Satyapal Singh doubled down on his assertion. "I'm a Man of Science," he told any Doubting

FOCUS

Sushil Kutty

Thomas. "I've a Masters in Chemistry from Delhi University."

Charles Darwin published his theory of evolution nearly 160 years ago. The naturalist argued that all species including humans evolved through a process of natural selection and that humans and apes shared a common ancestor who lived more than 7 million years ago. The theory was often misunderstood with some people thinking that modern apes turned into human beings. Dr Satyapal Singh appears to be one of those misunderstood souls. But then he cannot be blamed for mixing obscurantism with Science in the time of Narendra Modi. Religious nationalist figures have been pushing what is called "ideological science" ever since May 26, 2014, with Modi himself claiming that plastic surgery and genetic

science originated in ancient India. On Tuesday, when PM Modi was on a roll at the World Economic Forum in Davos, junior HRD minister Dr Singh was pulled up by senior HRD minister Prakash Javadekar and told to keep his yap shut on such issues. Javadekar also set the record straight on Darwin, saying that the Modi government had no plans to hold a seminar to prove Darwin's theory "wrong", that there were no moves to dilute Science in school and college curriculums.

That said, for as long as Darwin's theory stands scrutiny and survives, Dr Satyapal Singh's classic quote "Since the man is seen on Earth he has always been a man" will be quoted as the best piece of foiled attack on Darwin and his theory. It will remind people of Superman – who flew in from Outer Space, a full grown man with no ape in his pedigree – and Tarzan of the Apes, brought up by a she-ape but the son of an English Lord! And we can be sure that the junior HRD minister would not ever believe that we all live on the Planet of the Apes! (IPA)

Conventional Crossword

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10								
18	19							
23								

- ACROSS**
- Precious stone
 - Anger
 - Praise highly
 - Region
 - Absent
 - Glossy fabric
 - Responsibility
 - Mineral spring
 - Cricket score
 - Innermost part
 - Sound
 - Degrade
 - Henthouse
 - Metal
 - Happening
- DOWN**
- Acrimonious
 - Do wrong
 - Sanity
 - Saled item
 - Present
 - Make brown
 - Source of light
 - Is able
 - Set apart
 - Governing body
 - High period
 - Consumer
 - Nothing
 - Plunder
 - Call
 - Fish eggs
 - Wrongdoing

SUDOKU:2104

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

Yesterday's Solution 2103

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

Yesterday's Cross Word Solution 112

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

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