

US' arguments are facetious

Modi must remind Trump that India is not a climate freeloader

United States President Donald Trump celebrated his first 100 days in office with a speech in which, among other things, he promised to further dilute his country's commitments under the Paris agreement on climate change. Mr Trump claimed

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that China, India and Russia have a free pass under the agreement until 2030, repeating similar charges made by members of his administration earlier. He has already signed an executive order asking US federal agencies to ignore earlier regulations about emissions for power plants and incorporating climate impact in government environmental reviews. Now, it seems, Mr Trump plans more such actions.

Unsurprisingly, the US president's comments are factually incorrect when it comes to what India and China have committed to doing under Paris. Unlike the earlier Kyoto Protocol, the Paris agreement requires actions by both rich and poor nations. China committed to reduce carbon emissions 60-65% unit of GDP by 2030 from 2005 levels. India, whose per capita income is much smaller than those of the US and China, nonetheless made a similar promise of 30-35% reductions. Even under President Barack Obama's Paris pledges, the US would have probably fallen just short of the 26-28% reductions by 2030 required by the agreement. Mr Trump's earlier executive order, if fully implemented, would have seen the US's emissions reductions fall to 14%.

There are few world leaders as aware of the danger posed by climate change as Prime Minister Narendra Modi. While he is not an instinctive multilateralist, Modi should consider taking a more proactive role in rallying the world to save Paris. One part of this policy would be to engage Mr Trump and point out some of the fallacies in his arguments. Among other things, the US is a world leader in green technology and would benefit economically from Paris. Another part would be to turn to the European Union, Japan and China on how they could work together to plug any holes the US may leave behind.

Every child has the right to an education

Punish those who deny victims of sexual violence their legal right to go to school

How does society break the spirit of a girl who has survived the worst form of sexual violence, physical assault or life-threatening medical condition? You deny her the right to get an education. That is what happened in the case of a Delhi student whose parents have alleged that her school has asked her not to attend classes as it would "tarnish the image of the school." The class X student was kidnapped, raped and thrown out of a moving car. Even after she recovered, the girl was in for another shock. The school told the parents it would promote their daughter to Class XI only if she stopped attending classes. The school even forbade her from using the bus services, added the parents. The discrimination isn't limited to rape victims alone. According to studies by non-governmental bodies, children living with or affected by HIV/AIDS are increasingly being denied admission, suspended, expelled and publicly ridiculed by school authorities.

Apathetic teachers are not the only ones perpetuating hostility on unfortunate victims of sexual violence. Often, it is the pressure from parents of other children that forces many schools to expel students suffering from HIV. In January, while hearing a public interest litigation, the Supreme Court came to the rescue of such students with a promise to evolve guidelines under the Right to Education Act.

Government statistics say a woman is raped every 15 minutes in India and according to NACO statistics, 2.45 lakh of the 30.9 lakh people living with HIV in the country are children aged 15 or less. For a country that preens about its demographic dividend — more than 63% of the population is aged 15-59 years — such stigmatising is a shameful reality staring us in the face. The State needs to come down hard on those indulging in blame shifting and discrimination. It is the least we owe to the victims of such circumstances.

democracywall

HARSH MANDER



Don't use the cow to create schisms

The BJP should not invoke the Mahatma to seek death penalty for those who kill the animal

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat has called for a nationwide ban on cow slaughter, describing this as a 'sacred duty', and adding that in states where the RSS has dedicated swayamsewaks in power, strong laws are already in place.

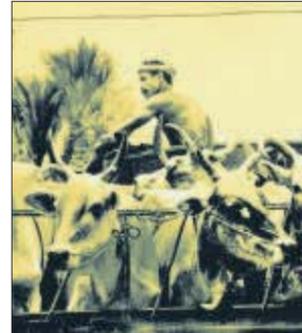
In 1954, when Congress MP Seth Govind Das moved a resolution in the Lok Sabha for a total ban on cow slaughter, Prime Minister Nehru reacted with acerbic firmness declaring 'I would rather resign than accept this nonsensical demand'. He warded off similar demands from the President Rajendra Prasad, dubbing banning cow slaughter 'unimportant and reactionary'. We have such travelled a long way as a nation since then.

However the rot had set in much earlier. Congress Chief Minister Sampurnanand of Uttar Pradesh in 1955 introduced a ban law in open defiance of Nehru's explicit wishes. Socialist Jayaprakash Narayan in 1966 wrote to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi 'I cannot understand why, in a Hindu majority country like India, where rightly or wrongly, there is such a strong feeling about cow-slaughter, there cannot be a legal ban'. Indira Gandhi refused then, resisting a nation-wide agitation by many Hindu organisations. But in 1982, in line with many steps to appease Hindu reli-

gious sentiment, she wrote to 14 Chief Ministers urging that the cow-slaughter ban be enforced in letter and spirit, and not allowed to be circumvented deviously. Prime Minister Morarji Desai had earlier admitted a move to bring a national cow-slaughter ban into the legislative competence of the central government.

Today most states have passed laws that prohibit cow slaughter. India Spend estimates that 99.38 percent of the country's population is covered by cow slaughter laws. Laws banning cow slaughter in nearly half of these states are roughly 50 years old, enacted during the tenure of the Congress.

Election speeches are today laced with innuendos attacking the 'pink revolution' of an alleged surge of beef exports. The Haryana government has even created a uniformed police force unit for cow protection. The Gujarat legislature approved life imprisonment for the killing cows. UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had as an MP introduced a private members bill seeking a nation-wide ban on cow slaughter. (His other bills were to amend the Constitution to rename India as 'Bharat, that is Hindustan'; to ban religious conversions; and for a uniform civil code). His first major drive in office has been in closing numerous abattoirs, casually imperiling the



File photo of cows being taken for slaughter in Kerala's Kozhikode district

livelhoods of tens of thousands.

BJP MP Subramaniam Swamy has introduced a bill seeking the death penalty for those convicted for cow slaughter. It is particularly unfortunate that Swamy invoked Mahatma Gandhi while seeking capital punishment for those who kill a cow in this proposed law. No doubt Gandhi was deeply devoted to the cow. Gandhi said he would 'defend its worship against the whole world', that cow worship is central to Hinduism, and even that she is superior to our biological mothers. But he stoutly opposed a legal ban on cow slaughter. 'I have been long pledged to

serve the cow but how can my religion also be the religion of the rest of the Indians? It will mean coercion against those Indians who are not Hindus'. To therefore appeal to Gandhi while advocating a nationwide ban on cow slaughter with death for those who defy the ban is disingenuous and unjust.

The gentle cow is no doubt beloved to millions of Indians. But the campaign today that claims to defend her has nothing to do with love of any kind. The cow is just recruited as another highly emotive symbol to beat down India's minorities into submission and fear. Other symbols are a grand Ram temple to replace a medieval mosque, charges that Muslim men are sexual pillagers, serial divorcees, reproductively irresponsible, allegations of their sympathy for terror, demands for curtailments in Muslim personal law, and claims of runaway Christian evangelism.

In this environment permissive of hate speech and violence, both the Muslim and the Dalit have been demonised as the cow-killing 'other', and vigilante attacks and extortion targeting have become common. The lynch mobbing of an ageing impoverished Muslim dairy farmer in Alwar is only the latest of these outrages, followed predictably by denials and victim blaming by politicians and police officials. With bigotry sanctioned from the top, this placid pastoral animal is being used today to pit one Indian against another. Too much blood has flowed already.

Harsh Mander is author, *Looking Away: Inequality, Prejudice and Indifference in New India*. The views expressed are personal

REDCORRIDOR



A CRPF search operation underway in a forest at Bijapur, Chhattisgarh. Precise intelligence inputs are important for any successful operation

AJAY AGGARWAL/HINDUSTAN TIMES

Air surveillance can avert Sukma-like Maoist attacks

There is no other option but to implement the 'security with development' strategy in letter and spirit



Rin April 24, Maoists killed 25 CRPF personnel in Sukma. The ambush took place only a kilometre away from a CRPF post at Burkapal, which was established in 2013 by the Chhattisgarh Police and later taken over by the force to bridge the 12-km gap between Chintagufa and Chintalnar.

The availability of precise intelligence input is important for any successful operation. In a hostile environment, the forces face a herculean task of keeping themselves alert all the time. In the absence of roads for transport and mobile connectivity, the flow of information often gets delayed and so security forces are unable to take timely action.

Further, it is also difficult to verify such information and many a times the anti-Maoist operations are launched based on general inputs. The scenario, however, has been changing steadily. The tardy speed of road construction has improved. With more delegation of power, local contractors have undertaken construction works, though in patches. When all other agencies failed, the task of road construction, along the most challenging routes (including the under-construction Dornapal-Chintagufa-Jagargunda highway) was taken up by the Chhattisgarh

Police Housing Corporation. Both central and state police provide security for this.

The mission of establishing 146 new mobile towers in the Maoist-hit areas has been accomplished. More are coming up. With more villages connected, intelligence will improve. Besides, three AIR stations are coming up in Bastar; regional programmes could help revive tribal culture and change the hostile atmosphere. We are also recruiting personnel for India Reserve battalions of Chhattisgarh from the Maoist-affected districts so that the problems related to local language and knowledge of terrain are minimised. The CRPF is also raising its Bastariya battalion. The next step is to use technology. For example, air surveillance of affected areas needs to be set-up at a battalion level. Plus we need more forces to reverse their mobile war. The central task of the Maoists still remaining the same i.e., to capture political power through protracted armed struggle with people's support, there is no other option than to implement the 'security with development' strategy in letter and spirit.

In an article in HT, former police officer Prakash Singh wrote 'the state police forces lean heavily on the shoulders of the central armed police forces' and 'are in a shambles'. This is not true: The state police forces have increased their strength threefold since 2000 and have also occupied forward camps. The state's ownership is total and complete.

RK Vij is additional director general of police, Chhattisgarh. The views expressed are personal

Modi's gambit on triple talaq has struck a chord

With the BJP breaching the Muslim vote bank, it is time the secular parties changed their political narrative



SUNITA ARON

In a Facebook interview with Hindustan Times, Uttar Pradesh health minister Siddharth Nath Singh had said in a lighter vein, 'Some Muslim women said they voted for me as they liked the dimples on my cheeks.'

But it's more than the dimples. The reports coming in from different corners of the state indicated a softening of the Muslims stance towards the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the party that had become an anathema for the community after the 1992 demolition of Babri mosque in Ayodhya and 2002 riots in Gujarat.

Since then the community ruthlessly voted to defeat the BJP.

It could well be a judicious move by the Muslims who have now realised the political potency of the BJP, both at the state and the centre. The Shias came on board first and now some Sunnis may also explore the saffron party despite its subtle thrust on the Hindutva agenda.

The All India Shia Personal Law Board has explicitly supported all the three controversial moves of Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath — a negotiated settlement of the Ayodhya dispute, a ban on triple talaq and cow slaughter, the third literally breaking the financial backbone of the community notwithstanding. Some of them had even celebrated the BJP's victory and Samajwadi Party's defeat as 'yaun-e-nijat' (day of riddance).

The 8% Shias have generally toed a different line from the Sunnis.

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board has however rejected government interference in matters of Muslim personal laws and an out-of-court settlement of the Ayodhya dispute.

Although the AIMPLB has strongly censured the social practice of triple talaq and called for social boycott of those who misused it, Muslim women are increasingly

WHEN PRIME MINISTER MODI DECIDED TO INCORPORATE TRIPLE TALAQ IN THEIR SANKALP PATRA, MUSLIM WOMEN STARTED HOPING FOR SOME SUCCOUR FROM TALAQS GIVEN ON PHONE, MAIL OR VERBALLY

veering to the government's stand to end the humiliating practice.

By any yardstick, it is not a small achievement for the party that had not fielded even a single Muslim candidate, both in the Lok Sabha and the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, for the simple reason that their Muslim candidate would not have been able to muster support of his own community, especially when the Bahujan Samaj Party had fielded 100 Muslims and the Samajwadi Party and the Congress had stitched an alliance to retain their support.

What seems to have worked for the BJP is its commitment to the social problem that Muslim women are facing — triple talaq, which they could not oppose out of fear of earning the wrath of the maulanas and their men folk.

Tamil Nadu has a unique system of jamaats, affiliated to the local moque, which settle domestic issues like dowry, divorce and domestic violence. But there was a time when most of the jamaats neither had a woman member on the board nor did they allow them to represent their own cases and thus delivered one-sided judgments that favoured men. I remember meeting women's rights activist Sherifa Khanum in the mid-1990s. After years of demonstrations she had succeeded in forming women jamaats to deliver justice to the battered women. The maulanas relented after public pressure.

Not everywhere in the country can a Muslim woman get her petition redressed. Thus when Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president Amit Shah decided to incorporate triple talaq in their election's sankalp patra, Muslim women started hoping for some succour from talaqs given on phone, mail or verbally. Maulanas resisted the BJP's promise but a fraction of women gave silent support to the party they had despised. The three other political parties — SP, BSP and Congress which are partly dependent on maulanas support in the elections — had never ever thought of touching the sensitive issue even with a barge pole.

However, public pressure is growing. Armed with government support, more and more women are challenging their husband's unilateral decisions and taking to the streets.

It's quite likely the maulanas may also be compelled to adopt a more conciliatory approach.

With the BJP penetrating the minority vote bank, howsoever minuscule, and the majority community resisting minority appeasement, it's time the secular parties change their political narrative to come back in the electoral competition.

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RITUALS HELP US TO BE POSITIVE AND LEAD A DISCIPLINED LIFE

PP Wangchuk

Rituals and customs are based on people's faith in living a better life by doing certain things that may or may not have any solid, scientific basis.

Most of us are used to performing rituals and customs because of their immediate value in helping us keep a positive mind and boosting our morale. Whereas customs help us have a disciplined life, rituals give us a psychological boost and we get ready for a better day through positive action.

Ofcourse, there are so many rituals and customs that are not good for a civilised world. Such rituals and customs must go for the greater good of humanity. And come to think of it, those of us who don't understand the difference between good and bad rituals need to be educated.

Over the years, education, social and religious movements have been able to do away with many such rituals. We are today much better off without them.

Advocating the use of rituals, American writer Corey Ann Haydu says that rituals

and customs "don't come out of nowhere, they come from something sacred and strange". Very loosely speaking, our daily habits are nothing but a part of the rituals that we follow. As such, we can say these rituals make it sure for us that we get to lead a kind of life that is in direct proportion to the

quality of our habits.
(Inner Voice comprises contributions from our readers.)

The views expressed are personal

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