



A thought for today

If the police, the politicians, can pass the buck on down the line, they will

PATRICIA CORNWELL, Postmortem

Nirbhaya Again

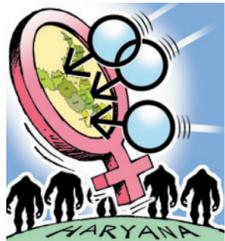
Rohtak gang rape shows laws alone can't deter heinous sexual offences

The horrific gang rape and murder of a 23-year-old woman in Haryana's Rohtak once again reminds us that sex crimes can't be tackled through tough legislation alone. Reminiscent of the brutal Nirbhaya gang rape case that shook the nation, the tormentors of the Rohtak victim had smashed her head and face with bricks to prevent identification. That such brutal sexual crimes have continued even after the enactment of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 – which redefined rape and made punishments more stringent – shows how weak policing and investigation are negating the intentions of legal provisions.

To illustrate this point, consider that when the Rohtak victim's mutilated body was brought for post-mortem, the police described the corpse as belonging to that of an unknown male. Bafflingly, starvation was recorded as the possible cause of death. Plus, there was no coordination between the forensic experts who examined the crime scene and the doctors who conducted the post-mortem, preventing the latter from giving a more detailed report. Such systemic lacunae in policing and investigation dilute the chances of nailing the guilty.

The truth is that getting procedures and systems right is a much harder task requiring marshalling of resources to address shortcomings in policing systems. Thus, lawmakers are inclined towards the much easier task of legislating tough laws. But without systemic reforms, these laws fail to attain their primary object. Moreover, by making them overly tough they become susceptible to misuse. This is precisely what has happened with the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act. Cases are on the rise where complainants have taken advantage of the new anti-rape law to harass innocents. Add to this the prevailing climate of conflating consensual sex, elopement or romance with rape as exemplified by the unfortunate labelling of the so-called anti-Romeo squads, and we have a situation where actual cases of rape are slipping through while innocents are punished.

The only solution lies in focussing on improving the conviction rate in genuine rape cases. This in turn would require considerable improvements in levels of investigation and evidence gathering. Plus, sexual offence laws should prescribe punishments commensurate with the degree of the crime. Clubbing everything under rape, making most of these offences non-bailable and enhancing punishment for all is a fallacious approach. It only creates incentives for brutalisation of victims on the one hand, and filing false cases on the other.



HARYANA

The Economy At Three

Three years of the NDA government have seen substantial and all-round improvements

Arvind Panagariya



Few disagree that when the present government took office three years back, the economy had been in great difficulty. Going by the new GDP series, growth had fallen to 5.6% in 2012-13 and 6.6% in 2013-14 compared to 8.3% during the preceding nine years. Inflation and the current account deficit were high. There was deep paralysis in decision-making, infrastructure projects were stuck in all areas, corruption scandals had been breaking out all around and investors were terrified of retrospective taxation.

Today the decision making process has been unblocked, infrastructure building has gained momentum, corruption has been reined in and fears associated with retrospective taxation have been assuaged. As a consequence, growth has been restored. The economy grew 7.2% during 2014-15, 7.9% during 2015-16 and 7.1% during 2016-17. Alongside, inflation has dropped from 8% during the first four months of 2014 to below 4% currently. Foreign direct investment during the three financial years of the government has summed to \$156 billion with the flow during 2016-17 alone being a record \$56 billion.

These indicators do not reflect the full potential of the economy created by the policy initiatives of the government. There are lags between the introduction of new policies and realisation of their full impact. It was many years of reforms, first under Prime Minister Narasimha Rao and then under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, that eventually translated into the 8.3% annual growth for nine years beginning in 2003-04.

On macroeconomic front, the government has steadily brought fiscal deficit down from 4.5% in 2013-14 to 3.5% in 2016-17 and has adopted the target of 3.2% in 2017-18 and 3% subsequently. It has also introduced inflation targeting, which has been central to holding down inflation. The exchange rate has been managed prudently. In 2013, in an episode that has come to be called "taper



Ulhas Dub

tantrum", rupee had massively depreciated just at the possibility of an interest-rate hike by the Federal Reserve of the United States. In contrast, it has been entirely unscathed recently despite substantial actual interest rate increases by the Fed.

A key focus area of the government has been governance. The list of measures includes the end to bureaucratic paralysis, streamlining of environmental clearances, improving the ease of doing business, self-certification of true copies of diplomas and degrees, repeal of 1,175 redundant laws, close monitoring of projects, ranking of states in health, education and water, end of plan and non-plan distinction in the budget, merging of the railway and national budget and advancing of date of budget presentation to cut delays in disbursement of funds to ministries and states. During the three years, there has not been a single allegation of high-level corruption.

Several key reforms have been introduced through new laws. Early legislations in this category included those relating to the auctions of coal

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and mineral mines. Later on came big-ticket items such as the Aadhaar Act, Insolvency and Bankruptcy Act and various Goods and Services Tax (GST) acts. The government has also moved steadily ahead on the foreign direct investment (FDI) front opening defence to FDI, raising the FDI cap on insurance to 49%, and permitting 100% FDI in marketing food products.

Closure of sick public sector units (PSUs) and privatisation of healthier ones that do not serve a public purpose have returned to the active policy agenda of the government. Surprising many sceptics, Cabinet has already approved the plans for the closure of nearly a

dozen sick PSUs. Privatisation has not moved at a commensurate pace but it too has made progress with the Cabinet giving a go ahead on 20 PSUs. The government is also proceeding with the listing of currently unlisted PSUs in a time-bound manner.

Rural development and social spending have acquired new vigour with empowerment replacing entitlement as the underlying philosophy. Rural electrification has greatly accelerated with every village set to receive electricity by May 1, 2018. Per-day rural road construction has accelerated to 133 km during 2016-17 compared with 73 km during 2011-14. Within a short time, two crore below poverty line (BPL) rural households have received LPG.

Housing for all initiative has received huge impetus with 10 million new rural houses to be constructed by 2019 in rural areas alone. Use of Aadhaar verification has led to the elimination of ghost and multiple accounts in the Public Distribution System (PDS), LPG distribution and MGNREGA wage lists. Asset construction under MGNREGA has significantly improved.

Finally, in the true spirit of federalism, states have emerged as equal partners of the Centre in development. Some states have reformed central laws in areas of labour and land acquisition on which the Centre has had difficulty moving ahead. Others have swiftly moved to reform tenancy laws through modern land leasing laws. Yet others have pioneered the spread of digitisation and e-mandis. Nearly all are experimenting with new ways to rejuvenate agriculture and vigorously promoting the Swachh Bharat Mission.

In sum, while many problems remain to be solved in a complex and vast economy such as ours, today, there are good reasons to be optimistic that in the years ahead India will emerge as the third largest economy in the world. When a courageous prime minister and numerous imaginative and hard-working chief ministers work together to take the economy forward, success cannot be far from the country's grasp.

The writer is Vice Chairman, Niti Aayog. Views are personal

Reform Or Populism?

Iranian voters have to choose between moderate Hassan Rouhani and a hardline cleric

Sandwiched between elections in France and South Korea on the one hand and Britain and Germany on the other, Iran will vote for its next president on May 19. As in the other cases, the result in Iran too will represent a choice of two sharply different visions of the future. If President Hassan Rouhani is re-elected, it would amount to winning a referendum on the nuclear deal he scripted with the US two years ago. It would strengthen the moderates and modernisation.

But a victory for hardline candidate Ebrahim Raisi would indicate that voters feel the promise of the nuclear deal, previously hyped as Iran's Berlin Wall destruction moment, have remained unmet. Lifting of sanctions was supposed to set off an economic boom. But the lifting is taking place in phases, and economic benefits take time to materialise. It is hard to guess how Iranian voters will call this one. If they lose patience and usher in Raisi it could see reformers being purged from the administration, anti-Americanism revitalised and isolationist nationalism marching ahead. If Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 77, dies during the next term, this vote could also influence the choice of his successor. Whether the next supreme leader is hardline or moderate will influence geopolitics from Syria to Saudi Arabia.

For the global energy market, in this season of elections the Iranian one matters the most. An active player here is India's ONGC Videsh Ltd, which has bid for developing Iran's Farzad B gas field. Overall a Rouhani victory may suit India most, not just for the sake of stability and continuity in policy but also because New Delhi would not like to see confrontation between Tehran and the West. So for India it's comforting that no Iranian president has ever lost his bid for re-election.



'India's territorial concerns valid but it can be more flexible on Belt Road Initiative while having red lines'

While India chose to stay out of China's Belt and Road Forum in Beijing on May 14-16 because of its objection to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which runs through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), representatives of as many as 64 countries attended.

Amitendu Palit, senior research fellow and research lead for trade and economic policy at ISAS, National University of Singapore, spoke to Natin Mehta on how India could calibrate its strategy on Belt Road Initiative (BRI) and what's at stake for both Beijing and Delhi.

■ BRI is said to involve over 60 countries, 4.4 billion people and 29% of global GDP, with over \$1 trillion of Chinese government money. How much of this is hype and how much is real?

Whatever numbers we are getting to hear are what is being told to us by the Chinese but the biggest problem with this initiative so far is that it is not very clear where specifically this money will go, in terms of projects. The only element where some details have been provided is CPEC. No other segment has any clarity: on project or whether there will be Chinese companies coming in or whether they will be collaborating on terms of engagement and so on. What the Chinese are trying to do is to take existing projects like Gwadar port in Pakistan or Hambantota

in Sri Lanka and saying that these are all part of OBOR. There is a certain degree of lack of transparency and more information and clarity are needed.

Otherwise, you might end up with situations where countries that need money for new initiatives, bring in Chinese companies on their terms and then end up discovering that they are in a perpetual debt trap. This has actually happened with Sri Lanka. There are expectations this might happen with Pakistan as well.

The majority of countries in the OBOR geography, especially in Central Asia, are all looking for funds and it is quite easy for the Chinese to sell them this carrot of funding for infrastructure and public goods for making OBOR politically legitimate. The only country which can counter this is India. Russia is playing a strategic game as they want to align with China for a variety of reasons.

■ Is India getting support for its stand on the problems with CPEC?

India is the only country which has a sovereignty issue with this because of CPEC passing through PoK. India's grievance is legitimate but CPEC came before they started calling this the Belt Road Initiative. China was aware that India would object but didn't bother. However, the land part is not the only component of this initiative. There is also a big maritime infrastructure

part, which India needs to look at more objectively. India can simply say that we won't agree to the corridor passing through our territories but on the other aspects of the project we are prepared to discuss. That way you don't send out a signal to the rest of the community that you are spoiling the show. Unfortunately, no country till now has come out openly in support of India's concerns.

■ So India can be more flexible while having its red lines?

Exactly. That is what we must do. There is no point in driving ourselves into a corner since we won't get supporters. A third country will go with whatever benefits it. We can negotiate because this project can never be fully successful without India. Purely from geo-

graphic and economic perspectives, it can only work if India is there. Our presence in OBOR will also give a sense of comfort to many other countries.

■ How is this being seen in South-east Asia?

BRI is a reasonably big deal in the region and being looked at as an initiative which can recharge economic momentum. No country wants to annoy China. The Nepalese ambassador's statement sums up the reality where he said we don't want to cause grief to India but China is an economic giant. You can't afford not to play ball with them. The ability they have for creating economic damage is substantive.

■ So as the US retreats, China steps in?

One of the difficulties we have is that China has started projecting this as part of its effort to push trade and globalisation. That sentiment resonates a lot in Asia. We cannot claim that we are a pro-connectivity country while continuing to create obstacles in trade talks. In the BRI vision document, trade is big with mention of multiple economic zones. It could all be speculative but it is there. We can get isolated on this.

Q&A

dilbert



Don't WannaCry

Some family tips on how to stop worrying about malware

Indrajit Hazra at timesgroup.com



I come from a family that informs me from time to time that my tweets have 'gone virus'. When introducing YouTube to my father – I played him music videos from Pyaasa – he was impressed and wanted to know where he could buy YouTube. I tried explaining how it works. But on remembering that he has operational difficulties with the TV remote, I informed him that YouTube was worth between \$26 billion and \$40 billion and it could be out of his reach.

So imagine my surprise when in her latest call from home, usually to check up whether I am on crack cocaine and am having enough greens to counter its effects, my mother asked me whether I'm safe. "Safe from?" "Cyberattacks," making it amazingly sound like a venereal disease.

So, the worldwide WannaCry ransomware attacks have reached my parents' doorstep. Even though they possess no computer. Or access ATMs. Or use credit cards. Which I do a lot, thereby making me in their eyes, at best, a gambling addict, and, at worst, a poor man's Subrata Roy.

The pen drive doesn't fall far from the USB port. So as I awoke from uneasy dreams (that had a very hairy Keanu Reeves in a remake of The Matrix), I found myself transformed in my bed into a paranoid worrying about being a victim of WannaCry. Pay at least \$300 in bitcoins or else you will never see your beloved data again. Never mind bitcoin, I don't even have Monopoly money.

But it's not my computer being frozen that worries me sick. Apart from a few sentimental pictures, and passwords on a Word doc file I keep changing every time BJP goes out of power, my computer holds few things precious. What worries me is the news that many ATMs are being shut down as preventive measures.

Granted, such a decision is far less crippling than the one dropped on our heads on November 8. But is it best to live a completely offline life? No cash machines. No downloaded movies. No online shopping. No Facebook. Essentially living the 1980s life minus the Onida TV ads on non-Onida TVs.

I put this question to my trustworthy VoIP (Very 'onestly Important Person) IT girl expert. "It's malware. Just get an anti-malware."

Realising I had no idea what anti-malware is, here I am, with a Bengali ranting about how Kolkata has been destroyed over the years by the malware community. This should protect my computer and stop Demonetisation 2.0 on its tracks.

Feed Your Starved Intellect & Beat Stress

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

The problem of stress is very common. Almost all of us suffer from stress and so we need to find a method for de-stressing. In my experience, there is no mechanical technique of de-stressing. Such a technique could be applied only to a robot, not to a living human being.

The first step is to diagnose the problem of stress. This is the beginning of the process of de-stressing. In my view, stress is actually a problem of starvation. Just as our body needs food, without which we would go hungry, so also does our intellect need 'food'. When we have a feeling of stress what we are actually experiencing is intellectual or spiritual starvation.

A verse from the Bible which is part of the Lord's Prayer says: "Give us today our daily bread." (Matthew: 6:11)

These words are meant to indicate to

us the course we need to take in self-training. It tells us that we need to feed our spiritual starvation. But this can happen only if we learn how to extract spiritual food from our daily experiences.

In nature, it is the honeybee which demonstrates this method by extracting nectar from flowers and making food from it for itself. Similarly, there is spiritual nectar for a person in every experience that he faces. This nectar has to be extracted on a daily basis from the experiences we have every day. If we fail to do so, we shall suffer from spiritual starvation.

For example, while at work in your office, you may feel that you are being discriminated against. If you reflect on the matter, you will find that what you faced was not a result of the D-factor, but of the Q-factor. That is, the reason for this was not

discrimination but was rather your own deficiency in whatever qualities were required in your office. Discovering this is like extracting nectar. Once you have extracted this 'nectar' you will find positive lines on which to think. You will focus on improving the quality of your work and soon see that there will be no more 'discrimination'.

People generally live in a self-centred world. They know about themselves, but remain unaware of others. Therefore every person tends to overestimate himself while he underestimates others. This disparity in thinking results in stress. If you are able to eliminate this disparity and adopt a realistic approach, you will certainly be able to lead a stress-free life.

Stress is often due to recalling past failures or worrying about the future. A

simple solution for the mental anguish caused by past failures is to forget them; similarly, a simple solution for worrying about the future is that you should think about the problem only if it becomes a reality rather than worry in advance. Very frequently what one worries about does not become a reality, so there is no need to worry about it beforehand.

I know a student who was so very worried about the result of his exam that he had to be hospitalised. But when the results came out, he had passed the exam with good marks. In this experience, there was nectar for the student – that is, he should have waited for the result rather than become worried in advance.

Stress may be equated with intellectual starvation. If you discover the art of feeding the intellect, you will never have to complain of stress.

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Sacredspace

Much Beyond ...

Beyond the senses is the mind. Beyond mind is the brain or intuition. Beyond that is Atman, the great soul. Beyond that is Avyakta, the non-manifested invisible Supreme. Above that is Purusha, the all-pervading, all-knowing Atman.

Katha Upanishad