



DECCAN HERALD

ESTABLISHED 1948

Delhi burned while Modi dined

The murderous violence and arson in Northeast Delhi since Sunday have claimed over 20 lives, left over 200 people injured, and the homes, shops, vehicles and livelihoods of hundreds destroyed. All this happened in the national capital right through the visit of US President Donald Trump who, ironically, paid tributes to the country's democracy, diversity, culture of tolerance and peace. Indeed, the ominous signs were visible on Sunday itself, on the eve of Trump's arrival in India, when BJP politician Kapil Mishra issued a chilling threat to Muslim women protesting against the Citizenship Amendment Act in the Maujpur area. With police officials standing beside him, Mishra declared openly that he would do nothing until Trump was in town but as soon as the visiting dignitary left on Tuesday, he would organise a Hindu mob and drive out the protesters. In the event, the mobs did not even wait for Tuesday. The attacks began hours later on Sunday itself. And for three days, Delhi Police stood by, or worse, as Delhi burned.

The hate-filled violence, which has rekindled the horrific memories of the 1984 anti-Sikh pogrom and the 2002 Gujarat pogrom, was perhaps waiting to happen for several weeks since the "desh ke gaddaron ko..." and "they will barge into your houses and rape your daughters and kill your sons" dog whistles were sounded during the Delhi Assembly election campaign. That Delhi Police, which functions under the Union Home Ministry, did not deploy adequate personnel, take out flag marches or attempt to stop the marauding mobs in their tracks, even when people were being beaten up right in front of them, cannot be put down to a failure of intelligence or failure to anticipate events, or even to a lack of adequate forces, especially after Mishra's open declaration. But then, Delhi Police has lost all credibility after the recent events at JNU, Jamia Millia, etc.

Delhi Police Commissioner Amulya Patnaik, who was recently granted extension of tenure by the Modi government, was neither seen nor heard these past three days. Home Minister Amit Shah declared that the violence was "spontaneous." Prime Minister Narendra Modi maintained total silence on the events and belatedly appealed for calm only on Wednesday, after most of the damage was done. For peace and calm to return and for the people of Northeast Delhi, many of whom are now leaving the place where they have lived for years, to have confidence in the police and government, Delhi Police could start by identifying those who indulged in violence and bringing them to justice. It won't be difficult to do so because there is enough evidence from CCTV cameras, news photos and footage. It does require political will, though.

On the brink of a pandemic

Thirteen weeks after the first case of Coronavirus (COVID-19) was identified in China's Wuhan, 79,331 confirmed cases and 2,595 deaths due to the disease have been reported, as per the latest figures from the World Health Organization (WHO). China continues to account for the bulk of cases and fatalities; it has identified 77,262 confirmed cases and nearly all the deaths due to the virus so far. Its struggle against the killer virus has not diminished. However, there is some good news coming out of China. The number of new cases in the country is falling. WHO officials have said that the Coronavirus outbreak in China peaked between January 23 and February 2 and the number of new cases has been declining since then. This means that Beijing's measures to contain the virus, harsh as they were in their implementation, have yielded results. However, some health experts are questioning WHO's claims on the matter. They believe that it is based on flawed data coming out of China. China is underreporting the number of new cases and fatalities to justify its controversial measures to stem the spread of the disease, they argue.

The spread of Coronavirus outside China is alarming. In January, just a few cases of COVID-19 were reported, mainly from East and Southeast Asia, with a handful beyond China's immediate neighbourhood. That has changed dramatically over the past week. The number of cases and fatalities has jumped in South Korea, Iran and Italy. WHO, which has labelled the COVID-19 outbreak as a 'global health emergency' has warned that the world is on the brink of a 'pandemic'. If all countries do not act robustly to contain the global spread of Coronavirus and if a large number of deaths occur outside China in the coming weeks, then the world would be caught in a pandemic, WHO has warned. COVID-19 is claiming lives and is a major drain on resources. It is already undermining economies and businesses, impacting livelihoods and impoverishing people. The impact of a pandemic will be far greater. The window to prevent it from becoming one is narrowing.

The international community must act swiftly and co-operatively. It is unfortunate that at a time when we should be pulling together to defeat the virus, governments are using the crisis for petty politics and settling scores. The Chinese government's inordinate delay in permitting an Indian plane to rescue its nationals still stuck in Wuhan is reprehensible. The same flight is to provide China with medicines and relief. Beijing's slow response to the concerns of other countries is undermining its own battle against COVID-19.



Delhi Police stands completely exposed

WHEN THE TRUMPETS BLARE Language of Statesmanship

India-US leadership encounters have historically entailed the finest minds in politics, diplomacy and statesmanship – from Nehru to Manmohan Singh, Ike to Obama

LT GEN (RETD) BHOPINDER SINGH

The dignity, solemnity and relevance of the moment was completely lost on President Donald Trump when he visited the Sabarmati Ashram and noted in the visitors' book "To my great friend Prime Minister Modi - Thank you for this wonderful visit." The thoughtless and inelegant omission of Mahatma Gandhi at the sanctum sanctorum of Gandhian sensibilities was attempted to be rectified at Rajghat the next day, but within the limits of Trump's ability with language and expression.

At Rajghat, the difference in presidential language was glaring as Trump penned, "The American people stand strongly with a sovereign and wonderful India - This is a tremendous honour," as compared to the more mellifluous, sincere and personal noting of President Barack Obama in 2010, "What Martin Luther King Jr. said then remains true today. The spirit of Gandhi is very well alive in India today. And it remains a great gift to the world. May we always live in this spirit of love and peace - among all people." The difference between Obama and Trump is personified by the unmistakable contrast of language, one that of a statesman, and the other of a political leader.

Presidents and prime ministers have official scriptwriters who craft messages in a manner and style that befits the preference, personality and aspirations of the leader concerned. While the essential 'substance' is usually defined by the leaders themselves, the wordsmithing and chiseling of the expression to 'lift' and sparkle the same is done by the backroom staff. Besides Obama's personal touches, flourishes and obvious gravitas, his memorable speeches were fleshed out by Jon Favreau and Cody Keenan. Trump has Vince Haley and Ross Worthington as scriptwriters, who maintain an unusually low profile due to Trump's make-believe attempts to posture his own eloquence, naturalness and felicity with words!

The cookie crumbles when these leaders attempt to add an impromptu embellishment to the script, that either elevates

the written text, as in the case of Obama, or morphs into incoherence and digression, as in the case of Trump. The unscripted text exposes the reality and constraints of each leader.

Deliberations between the leaders of India and the US have historically entailed the finest minds in the world of politics, diplomacy and statesmanship. When the World War-2 hero Dwight Eisenhower, or 'Ike', made the first visit by any President of the United States to India, he was met with men of immense calibre and erudition - President Rajendra Prasad, Vice President Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. The philosopher and academician Radhakrishnan had profoundly invoked Eisenhower's military background to state, "You are a great General; you know the vanity and foolishness of war to solve problems."



Despite the limited global impact of India in the economic sense during the early years, India managed a disproportionately large global recognition due to the quality and tenor of its leadership that exemplified civilisational, moral and internationalist leadership. Despite India's non-aligned fixation and perceived closeness with the Soviet 'bloc', Nehru's natural charm and persona impressed John F Kennedy enough to override opposition from his own bureaucracy on matters concerning India. The subsequent Indira-Nixon, Carter-Moraji and Rajiv-Reagan engagements were more functional and lacklustre, reflective of the individuals on both sides.

President Bill Clinton's visit in 2000 was a landmark and definitive turning point in the Indo-US relationship, and the quality of leadership involved was obvious. The Indian side was represented by arguably the most sagacious Indian President ever, who let his work do the talking, President KR Narayanan, flanked by the brilliance of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Team Vajpayee was loaded with professional acumen in the form of their repressible foreign minister in Jaswant Singh and National Security Adviser Brijesh Mishra. Team Clinton was represented by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and her deputy Strobe Talbot. The backdrop of the nuclear tests, Kargil and sanctions was palpable, but the collective wisdom ensured that the process of normalisation was initiated in earnest. Both Narayanan and Vajpayee were serious men of letters who did not require a written script to leave their mark, and both were known to add their 'personal touch', often to the discomfiture of the officialdom, and even to each other.

President Narayanan had been a former ambassador to the US, China, UK and Japan, besides being Vice President, Union minister, and Vice-Chancellor of JNU. He had authored books and was a four-time MP. His understanding of the delicacies of diplomacy, sobriety and nuances of international politics was unmatched. Narayanan's speech in honour of President Clinton at the Rashtrapati Bhawan was a masterclass in gently calling out the American attitude when he said, "As an African statesman has observed to us, the fact that the world is a global village does not mean that it will be run by one village headman." The message was not lost on Clinton, even as the dignity of the moment was upheld. Likewise, the sagacity of Vajpayee was such that he tasked his 'political Hanuman' in warrior-politician Jaswant Singh to carry the baton of engagement in his typical military manner and effectiveness. Reconciliation happened, history changed.

Later, the personal assertion of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in insisting on the India-US nuclear deal ensured the highest mutual respect between 7, Race Course Road (now Lok Kalyan Marg), and the White House. On Manmohan Singh, Obama had presciently commented, "When the Prime Minister speaks, the world listens." Such was the accompanying language of Indo-US engagements.

Language is a reflection on statesmanship. Author David Lit notes on Obama, "What made Obama the adult in the room was the way he defined his priorities. Children strive only for pleasure; adults strive for fulfillment. Children demand adoration; adults earn respect. Children find worth in what they acquire; adults find worth in the responsibilities they bear." And of Trump, he said, the "oldest person ever to become President. But he's also our first child commander-in-chief." Clearly, Obama was a statesman, Trump isn't.

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

When the journey becomes the destination

We hold on to the hope that life will surprise us and resolve our uncertainty

ADITI PANT

We are never so vulnerable than when we love, trust or tread the unknown. All of us have been in situations where we feel susceptible, unsure and maybe a little lost. Even when we resolve to be stoic, there is a part of us that hopes that life will surprise us and turn our moments of uncertainty into moments of benign calm and clarity.

My husband and I got married 15 days after we met, after our parents arranged the match. Although I was quite young to realize the enormity of our decision, the trepidation of walking into uncharted territory did not escape me.

This uncertainty completely enveloped me once I left my home, my town and

found myself in a railway station waiting for the train to take me and my 'new family' to my 'new home'.

Suddenly, everything I had left behind began to gather over me like a cloud and I felt particularly vulnerable. I looked around, seeking something familiar to hold on to. I saw my sister-in-law looking at me intently and soon she was by my side asking if I needed anything. Although I was reticent, she persuaded me to answer her questions, gently and genuinely. Even before I realized what I was doing, I began talking to her about my feelings with some diffidence at first and then with abandon.

I opened up to her like I had opened up to no one in the few days leading up to the wedding. I told her how difficult it was to leave home and a familiar way of life. She listened like she was genuinely interested and in the course of our conversation, I also told her how I often found solace in reading. She was polite and warm. The clouds that had earlier threatened rain,

lifted and I felt lighter than I had felt in days.

Soon it was time to get on the train. Everyone rushed in; my sister-in-law was the last to get in. She came and sat beside me and as the train pulled out of the station, she gently handed a package to me. "Maybe this is not what you are used to, but it will do nicely during the train ride" was all she said. As I unpacked the package and held the new bestseller in my hand, I felt my heart expand from within my ribs. Out of her own volition, she had found something for me to read!

As the train chugged towards its destination, I realized, harmony and delight in the form of people and situations can only come to you when you accept your vulnerability; when despite the misgivings in your heart you are open and welcoming to what life might bring. When you communicate your feeling to others with truth, your vulnerability resonates with theirs. They become a part of the journey that takes you home.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ironic that Trump, Modi held discussions on religious freedom

Apropos "Trump avoids CAA, offers to mediate on Kashmir (DH, Feb 26)", it is a tragedy that the two populist leaders like US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi had discussions about religious freedom. The Democracy Index of 2019 reported the erosion of civil liberties as the main reason for the regression of democracy in the world. In this context, one can conclude that the discussions among these leaders were on the lines of sheer populism. Certain policies adopted by these leaders have heavily curtailed the liberty and freedom of

the citizens. The emergence of right-wing populism is a global phenomenon and India is not an exception to this pattern. Some of the individual liberal values of democracy that were affected by the government were the right to expression, religion, choice of food, right to worship, right to economic freedom and the right to dissent. Democracy has become the casualty in the hands of political elites ably promoted through extremist Hindu political ideology and fringe groups.
Nayakra Veerasha, Bengaluru

Quell riots

While Prime Minister Narendra Modi was busy basking in US President Donald Trump's much-touted visit, it seemed he had turned Nelson's eye to our capital city which was burning both literally and figuratively. This situation is akin to Nero playing his fiddle when Rome burned. The brutal riots fuelled by hate speech has brought us immense grief. We simultaneously witnessed a spectacle on one hand and a debacle on another. Enough is enough. It is high time the violence is quelled.
Adrian David, Chennai

Avoid loaded comments

New Delhi saw the death of 23 people. At least 180 were injured, and rioters armed with stones, iron rods and

some with swords were brought to the hospital, some also suffered from bullet injuries in northeast Delhi as reported in, "Violence continues in Northeast Delhi, toll 13" (DH, Feb 26). The need of the hour is to restore peace by dealing with rioters with firmness so that the situation does spiral into anarchy. What is of utmost importance is that the political leaders should exercise utmost caution and restraint from making loaded comments.
HR Babu Satyanarayana, Bengaluru

Casinos will do no good

Out of around 10.00 million foreign tourists arriving in India, hardly 7 to 8 lakh tourists visit Karnataka in spite of the existence of several landmark monuments and temples at Belur, Halebidu, Hampi and Shravanabel-

agola. We also have pristine beaches, spectacular wildlife and beautiful weather throughout the year. We have totally failed in providing suitable amenities and infrastructure at our tourist spots. Like the rest of the country, foreign tourists are harassed and fleeced in every possible manner and most of them go back with bad memories. This explains why a small country like Vietnam is visited by 15.5 million tourists last year as against 10.00 million arriving in India. Karnataka tourism minister's plan to start gambling casinos to attract tourists is bound to fail miserably.
KMR Prasad, Bengaluru

Our readers are welcome to email letters to: letters@deccanherald.co.in (only letters emailed - not handwritten - will be accepted). All letters must carry the sender's postal address and phone number.

SPEAK OUT

Peace and harmony are central to our ethos. I appeal to my sisters and brothers of Delhi to maintain peace and brotherhood at all times.

Narendra Modi, Prime Minister



At funerals, people say things about a dead person that they should have told them while they were still alive.

Wayne Gerard Trotman

TO BE PRECISE



IN PERSPECTIVE

Incompetent coastal authorities

Those entrusted with protecting the coastal environment have given dubious clearances to Karwar port expansion projects

MAHA BALESHWAR HEGDE, KIRIT PATEL, ALAN DIDUCK

The fusion of beautiful coastline, mountains and a fertile riverbed in Karwar has impressed poets and scientists alike. The coastline, demarcated as one of the 12 critically vulnerable coastal areas (CVCA) by the coastal regulation zone authority (CRZ), is unique and ecologically significant for the entire region. The Government of Karnataka proposed a Rs 1,900 crore plan to expand the Karwar port in 2017. The proposed project will add five berths to the port, enhancing the existing capacity from 3 million tons per annum (MTPA) to 7.5 MTPA. It requires the construction of a 1.35 km-long breakwater to reduce the intensity of waves hitting the berths. The fishing communities along the coastline challenged the project as it directly threatens coastal ecology, their livelihood and wellbeing.

The Directorate of Ports chose to limit the size of the expansion to less than 5 MTPA so that the environmental clearance (EC) proposal would be appraised by the state-level agency rather than the central Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) in Delhi. In a public hearing for the project, people raised questions about land acquisition, the project's technical plans, including dredging of a 12 km-long channel for navigation of large vessels, potential increases in water pollution and turbidity due to high traffic volumes. Their major concerns were about the cumulative impacts of the port expansion and other projects on marine life and subsequent shrinking of their fishing grounds and fish catches. Despite these serious concerns, the State Environmental Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) granted an EC for the project on January 23, 2019.

Challenging the EC The Karwar fishing community approached the MoEF&CC in May 2019 and requested it to revoke the EC issued by the SEIAA. They argued that the proposed project is located within a 5 km radius of an eco-sensitive zone designated under the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification 2011, and as such, as per the EIA Notification of 2006, should be reviewed by the MoEF&CC.

This argument is in line with the recent judgement in G Sundarajan vs Union of India and Others (Appeal No 60 of 2018) adjudicated by the National Green Tribunal (NGT). Another ground for challenging the EC relates to lack of attention to cumulative impacts as the government conveniently ignored the fact that the port would have a total capacity of 7.5 MTPA, not 4.5 MTPA as argued by the project proponent.

Additionally, the fishermen's association argued that the project proponent provided false and misleading information in the environmental impact assessment (EIA) report to get the EC from the SEIAA.

Industry always finds a way

The MoEF&CC acknowledged the concerns expressed by the fishermen's association and sent a letter to the Karnataka SEIAA in June 2019. It tasked the SEIAA to "reconsider the decision and take appropriate action with respect to the complaint." While the fishermen were waiting for a resolution, the Karnataka State Coastal Zone Management Authority (KSCZMA) granted a separate clearance to build a 1.35 km-long breakwater. The port authority quickly geared up its heavy equipment, started construction in December 2019, and informed the fishermen that the breakwater is a separate activity from the expansion of the port for which the EC is still under review.

The KSCZMA endorsed that position of the project proponent and naively presumed that their approval of the breakwater would have no repercussions for the pending decision on the EC or the marine environment.

Competence questioned

The KSCZMA is the prime environmental regulatory agency, with a mandate to protect and improve the quality of the coastal environment. The trivial conditions laid out for the clearance of the breakwater - such as no dumping in the sea of sewage from the construction activities - raise serious doubts about the KSCZMA's competence to objectively assess the environmental risk of the project. It is unfathomable how the agency can view the construction of a port and a breakwater as separate entities.

How can they dodge the question raised by the fishing community and scientists on the potential cumulative impacts of the port on the critically vulnerable coastal zone located 3 km away? How can they not recognize the misleading and missing information from the EIA report submitted by the project proponent for seeking the EC?

The KSCZMA and the other authorities involved at the state level cannot attribute such lapses to lack of inter-agency communication. The KSCZMA, SEIAA, and other environmental agencies involved in granting the EC have several overlapping members and are often overseen by the same senior-level officer from the Department of Forest, Ecology, and Environment in Bengaluru.

Whatever the explanation is, it is abundantly clear that the breakwater clearance paves the way for the port expansion and, ultimately, this will have serious negative impact on the coastal environment and the directly affected communities. (Hegde and Diduck are Post-doctoral Fellow and Professor, respectively, at the University of Winnipeg, Canada; Patel is Associate Professor, Menno Simons College, Winnipeg)