Editorial

The rascal Godman drama

Something seems to be seriously wrong with the people of Haryana and its neighbouring state who are blind follower of Godman Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh who was convicted 20 years jail term for raping his follower. Rape is being criticised across the country and many are voicing stern punishment for the rapist. But what is more surprising is that why so many people are against the Court verdict for punishment of the so call God man who is accused of raping so many girls including his adopted daughter.

The violence unleashed by Dera Sacha Sauda supporters in the immediate aftermath of the conviction and arrest of Godman Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh is highly condemnable. But even more so is the abject surrender to the goons by the Haryana government which allowed thousands to congregate in Panchkula where the CBI court's verdict in the rape case involving Ram Rahim was delivered and to wreak havoc on innocent residents. Accountability for such gross mishandling of an event has to start from the top.

By that token, the State's Chief Minister, Manohar Lal Khattar, does not deserve to be in the coveted saddle for one more day. He miscalculated and misjudged the reaction of the Sacha Sauda supporters who had gone to Panchkula with violence in their head, and apparently believed the assurances of the Godman that his cadres would not resort to violence.

There was indeed a perceptible softness of approach for which innocent people paid with their lives and property. Residents of Panchkula who were witness to the ghastly events insist that the miscreants were well-prepared and both the local police and the para-military forces showed appalling dereliction of duty. It was the army which, with a mere 350 soldiers, controlled the situation from turning uglier.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Mann ki baat' radio address yesterday whose crux was that violence in the name of faith was unacceptable, would indeed ring hollow if the Chief Minister is not removed in pursuance of the principle of accountability.

It is on the lips of the entire media and the citizenry that this was a clear case of the BJP having had a soft corner for the Godman and his sect. It is common knowledge that the State government was indebted to Dera Sacha Sauda for having supported it wholeheartedly in the last Assembly elections. In the preceding elections it was the Congress that was the principal beneficiary. With an estimated five crore supporters, the dera was a formidable vote bank.

But that did not mean that the State administration did not have a responsibility to protect the people from lumpen crowds that went berserk. The ghastly events in Panchkula and some other strongholds of Sacha Sauda have drilled fear in the minds of people at large. Horrible memories of the sect's supporters going on the rampage will live on in people's minds for a long time. If the Modi government is to make amends and win back the trust of the people even partially, it must act fast.

Not only must the Chief Minister be sacked and replaced by a person of unimpeachable public goodwill, the miscreants of that day must be punished for their misdeeds without fear or favour. Above all, the BJP and the Congress in particular must learn a lesson from the events of that fateful Friday not to sacrifice public interest at the altar of political expediency and vote bank politics.

Bank pass book lost

I, the undersigned have lost my State Bank of India (SBI) pass book , account no. 30923487344 issued by the SBI, Bishnupur Branch, on the way between Kwakeithel to Kwairamband Market on August 21, 2017.

Finders are requested to kindly hand over the items to the undersigned.

Sd/-
Salam Govin Singh

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Assessing India's Progress in Various Fields

By : Anshuman Bhargava

We are celebrating 70 years of our Independence. But looking back at the history of these seven decades, what are the things which we should be proud of? Have we really progressed much and reached the level we should have in all these years?

The verdict will be divided. India is a land of a diverse population, with great variations in economic standards, having different religious and cultural customs and different stages of development. Hence, every section has its own view of development and reasons to whine or cheer.

But there are certain major and decisive strides we have made in these years particularly during last three years which no one can ignore or deny, irrespective of his or her political affiliation or personal grudges against certain leaders or governments or the 'system'.

Perhaps our greatest achievement is to have evolved a healthy democratic government system.

We have a very strong constitutional framework that makes democracy such a success here. But that is just the tip of the iceberg. Our achievements in these years are endless, should we sit to prepare an exhaustive list. We have some of the best institutes in the world in the form of IIMs and IITs.

Our healthcare sector is looking up and health tourism is a reality where people from advanced nations are coming here for affordable treatment. We have a railway network that is among the largest in the world in terms of track length and passenger volume. We have one of the largest armies in the world.

We have among the world's busiest airports in Delhi and Mumbai. Our life expectancy at birth has increased from a mere 32 years in 1947 to 66 years today. We were one of the foremost nations to establish nuclear reactors and produce clean energy. Despite our financial and technological limitations, we have made the best use of our resources and from an importer of even a needle, today we are exporters of software.

Our technocrats and managers are celebrated worldwide for their professionalism and calibre. Today we are a nation reckoned as a leader in space technology. Millions of Indians have fought their way in and made Europe and the US their home, by sheer virtue of their hard work and professional competence, contributing seminally in global projects.

We have produced noble laureates, artists, singers, musicians, writers, sportsmen, scientists, diplomats, scholars and statesmen of world repute year after year, in hundreds. This is no mean thing in just seven decades of our independent existence. We had difficult times in recent years with policy paralysis in government and slackness in ideation that slowed down India's growth trajectory to some extent but in the last three years or so of the NDA government, things have started looking up.

In less than three years, at least 30 new projects have been launched for giving a new shape and direction to the country like Jan Dhan, Swachh Bharat, Startup India, Nat'l Health Policy, Give up LPG, Skill India, Make in India, Smart City, Udaan scheme, GST, Digital India, Crop Insurance scheme to name a few, even if we leave for the moment aggressive advancements in railway and road networks and facilities.

No wonder World Investment Report finds India among the top three prospective host economies of the world. In Financial Year 2015-16 we had a whopping 55 billion dollars' worth of investments in the country. In World economic forum Global Competitive Index, India has jumped 32 places and today the country is the 6th largest manufacturing nation in the world. Projects worth Rs. 8 lakh crore pending for years have now been cleared and put on the fast track under the Prime Minister's personal initiative.

India's effort and commitment towards production and use of clean energy has found praise globally. The government has plans to produce 175 GW of renewable energy and we have already realised 50 GW production level in last three years. India stands 4th in the world in global wind power installed capacity. At least 22 crores LED bulbs have been distributed, which is to lead to saving of Rs 11,000 crore in electricity bills of the country.

The government is not only targeting mega projects but is equally attentive towards micro-level social engineering and taking grassroots level steps to strengthen the common man and the rural foundations.

The Prime Minister deeply believes in public participation and hence all projects are prepared with a view to benefit more and more people. In just three years of his governance, the government has ensured the establishment of 50,000 km of power transmission lines, even as over last five decades we had only 16,000 km covered. Not only that, in less than three years we have over 12,000 villages electrified, even as when the government came in power, it found over 18,000 villages in Independent India still living in the dark.

Between 2010 and 2014, just 59 village panchayats had been connected with optical fibre network which in last three years stands at 77,000 panchayats. Such is the pace at which the government is working. It is very likely that in next two years we will have all the 2.5 lakh villages enjoying optical fibre network to enjoy seamless internet and communication facility.

The buzzword of the government is transparency and to bring in transparency in government working, digitisation has a big role to play, which is why the government is taking along the two together. The more digital technology penetration we have, the lesser corruption we have because everything is in the public domain for everyone to see and track. As Prime Minister Modi says, it is all about change in the viewpoint and way of handling things that would make all the difference.

The NDA government is a departure from the past because it has changed the work culture and viewpoint of the people, instilling hope in them, pushing them to dream big. The seeds of every success lie in dreams that we cherish!

The author is State Editor of the Madhya Pradesh Editions of The Hitavada.
Views expressed in the article are author's personal.
(This feature has been contributed by PIB Bhopal)

National & International News

Marital rape: Centre's stand in Delhi High Court sparks big debate on social media

FE online

New Delhi, Aug. 29: Government of India's firm stand against making marital rape a criminal offence has sparked debate on social media. On Tuesday, the Centre in its submission to Delhi High Court said marital rape is not defined in any statue, while rape is defined under Section 375 of IPC. It said, "Defining marital rape would call for a broad based consensus of the society." The Centre argued, "What may appear to be marital rape to an individual wife, it may not appear so to others. As to what constitutes marital rape and what would constitute marital non-rape needs to be defined precisely before a view on its criminalization is taken."

The Centre's submission further said, "That it has to been ensured adequately that marital rape does not become a phenomenon which may destabilize the institution of marriage apart from being an easy tool for harassing the husbands. Quoting the misuse of section 498A of IPC observed by courts, the Centre's sumbission said it needs to be "ensured adequately that marital rape does not become a phenomenon which may destabilize the institution of marriage apart from being an easy tool for harassing the husbands."

"If all sexual acts by a man with his own wife will qualify to be marital rape, then the judgment as to whether it is a marital rape or not will singularly rest with the wife. The question is what evidences the Courts will rely upon in such circumstances as there can be no lasting evidence in case of sexual acts between a man and his own wife," it added.

Centre's submission has divided social media usersas divergent opinions have come up. Swaraj Kaushal, Supreme Court lawyer, former governor and husband of Union External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj on Tuesday tweeted, "There will be more husbands in the jail, than in the house". When a user asked if he was defending marital rape, Kaushal replied, "There is nothing like marital rape. Our homes should not become police stations". Journalist and writer Rana Ayyub commented on Swaraj's stand, saying, "Ex governor and husband of MEA sushma swaraj defends marital rape. So don't rejoice yet over sending godmen to jail."

Celebrated author Devdutt Pattanaik, however, believes marital rape should be declared unconstitutional. "Now that we have finally declared triple talaq unconstitutional, will we please declare marital rape & homophobia to be unconstitutional?," he tweeted. Senior journalist Nidhi Rajdan said, "India can learn something from its neighbours. Nepal has laws against marital rape, so does Bhutan." In another tweet, she argues, "So the govt is saying it's ok to be raped once you're married. It's ok for husbands to rape wives? Wives can't say no? Pathetic logic."

However, Madhavan Narayanan, journalist and writer, tweeted, "There is reckless lobbying by activists on #MaritalRape. Out of context statements and poor understanding of first principles." Supreme Court lawyer Karuna Nundy, tweeted, "At marital rape constitutionality hearing today: *Govt now supports marital rape exception. In writing. * Another MRA popped up. Tomorrow."

Maya Mirchandani, Senior Fellow at ORF, says, "It's (Centre's) commitment to gender justice seems restricted to abolishing #Tripletalaq. Marital rape/dowry deaths almost never mentioned. Why?"

The Centre had also argued that India doesn't need to follow countries where marital rape has been criminalised. "That the fact that other countries, mostly western, have criminalized marital rape does not necessarily mean India should also follow them blindly. This country has its own unique problems due to various factors like literacy, lack of financial empowerment of the majority of females, mindset of the society, vast diversity, poverty, etc. and these should be considered carefully before criminalizing marital rape."

Heavy rains claim four lives in Mumbai

PTI

Mumbai, Aug 30: Four persons were washed away in separate incidents in Mumbai following torrential rains since yesterday, the police said. The incidents were reported from Dahisar, Kandivli, Malad and Dadar areas, a senior police official said. While two were washed away in nullahs, one was washed away in a drain and the other was washed away during Ganesh idol immersion proceedings, he added. In another incident, one person Rameshwar Tiwari was killed after the wall of a power sub-station fell on his house in Asalpha village in suburban Ghatkopar, police said. His 35-year-old wife and nine-year-old son sustained injuries in the incident that took place in the early hours, they added.

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Shri Khumukcham Mangi Singh,
Retd. Dy. Commandant, 1st IRB
Govt. of Manipur
(Expired on 23/8/2017)

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