

A test of governance: On Delhi violence

The police must clamp down on the communal violence in Delhi

Communal violence in parts of Delhi, an earshot away from the nerve centre of the government of India, has claimed 13 lives and left over 150 injured. Mobs of pro-CAA demonstrators and anti-CAA protesters wielding sticks and weapons have taken over parts of the city and the Delhi police have proved themselves woefully inadequate at best and outrageously partisan and communal at worst, in responding to the situation. There was nothing abrupt or unexpected about the violence that erupted in the city's north-eastern parts on Monday. This has been in the making for weeks. There was arson and violence on December 16, in areas around the Jamia Milia Islamia, to which the police responded by indiscriminately unleashing violence on students inside the university. A group of masked rioters went from room to room in student hostels in JNU on January 5 and the police stood passively. Rioters clearly identified through pictures have not been arrested yet. The Delhi police did nothing when a gunman opened fire at anti-CAA protesters on January 30. This smouldering situation turned into conflagration by Sunday evening as mobs formed on communal lines prepared to take on each other. Both sides complain that calls were made to the police since Sunday but there was no effective intervention. As chaos and arson spread through Monday, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla inexplicably characterised the situation as "fully under control".

The inaction and inefficiency of the Delhi police is linked to varying grades of incitement and silent consent to communal mobilisation by the BJP that is in power at the Centre. Policing and law and order in Delhi are the responsibility of the Union Home Ministry. Speeches of Home Minister Amit Shah and Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the recent Assembly election campaign in Delhi were clearly meant to encourage communal polarisation. Lower rung leaders acted on cue and turned Delhi into a communal cauldron over recent months. Union Minister of State for Home G. Kishan Reddy's statement that the Delhi violence is a "conspiracy to shame India globally" during U.S. President Donald Trump's visit is beside the point. The unfailing efficiency claimed by those who control the Central and State governments in Delhi will be proven shallow if they cannot enforce elementary law and order right under their nose. Communal violence anytime, anywhere happens only due to the inefficiency or collusion or both of those in power. The Prime Minister and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal must prove their efficiency and administrative skills by clamping down on violence, whatever it takes.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **clamp down on** (phrasal verb) – prevent, stop, put an end to; keep under control.
- **earshot** (adjective) – hearing distance.
- **nerve centre** (adjective) – centre of activity, focal point, hub/heart.
- **mob** (noun) – a large, disorganized, and often violent crowd of people
- **wield** (verb) – use, put to use, employ, handle.
- **take over** (phrasal verb) – gain control of, take charge of, take command of.
- **woefully** (adverb) – very badly; deplorably, sadly/regrettably.
- **at best** (phrase) – simply, merely, only, nothing but.
- **outrageously** (adverb) – shockingly, excessively, appallingly.
- **partisan** (adjective) – biased, prejudiced, one-sided.
- **at worst** (phrase) – considering someone under the most unfortunate/negative way possible.
- **erupt** (verb) – break out, start suddenly, flare up.
- **in the making** (phrase) – burgeoning, coming, growing, developing.
- **arson** (noun) – setting fire intentionally to damage/destroy public properties, particularly buildings.

- **indiscriminately** (adverb) – aimlessly, unsystematically; carelessly.
 - **unleash** (verb) – let loose, release, set free.
 - **passively** (adverb) – submissively, unassertively, unresistingly/unassumingly.
 - **smouldering** (adjective) – fuming, expressing, showing (great anger).
 - **conflagration** (noun) – a large and destructive crisis (fire).
 - **take on** (phrasal verb) – compete against, oppose, challenge/confront, fight.
 - **chaos** (noun) – disorder, turmoil, mayhem/disruption.
 - **inexplicably** (adverb) – in a way something cannot be accountable/explainable/understandable.
 - **characterise** (verb) – identify, specify, describe.
 - **inaction** (noun) – inactivity, negligence, disregard.
 - **inefficiency** (noun) – incapability, inability, failure, carelessness.
 - **incitement** (noun) – inducement, motivation, provocation.
 - **consent** (noun) – permission, authorization, approval.
 - **mobilisation** (noun) – the act of bringing people/resources together for a particular cause.
 - **rung** (noun) – level, rank, position/grade.
 - **on cue** (phrase) – if something happens on cue, it happens after someone said that it would happen; at the signal/indication/hint of someone.
 - **cauldron** (noun) – unstable situation, uncertainty (with emotions).
 - **conspiracy** (noun) – unlawful plan, intrigue, collaboration/deception.
 - **beside the point** (phrase) – irrelevant, pointless, unimportant.
 - **unfailing** (adjective) – immeasurable, incalculable, inestimable; constant/steadfast.
 - **shallow** (adjective) – insubstantial, superficial, insignificant, empty, trivial.
 - **under someone's nose** (phrase) – (of an action) done without fear and openly.
 - **collusion** (noun) – conspiracy, intrigue, secret understanding, collaboration.
 - **whatever it takes** (phrase) – anything, extreme measures it takes to achieve something.
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Choice and candidacy: On crime and politics

De-criminalisation of politics cannot be achieved by judicial fiat alone

The idea of removing the taint of criminality from electoral politics has been engaging the country for decades. Yet, whatever progress made in this regard has been through the initiative of the Supreme Court and the Election Commission. Political parties which ought to be cleansing the system with legislation and internal organisational reforms have done precious little, and their reluctance to avoid fielding those with criminal antecedents is quite obvious. The Court, in September 2018, sought to enforce greater disclosure norms about electoral candidates. On noting the "alarming increase" of those with a criminal background in the last four general elections, the top court has now come up with an additional requirement while hearing a contempt of court petition. Now, parties have been asked to explain candidate choice and why those with criminal cases pending against them were preferred over those with no such record. The Court has asked national and regional parties to disclose the reason for their selection "with reference to qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidates concerned", and barred them from merely citing "winnability" as a reason. In addition to full disclosure of the cases pending against them on their official websites and social media accounts, the parties are also required to publish these details in a local regional language paper and a national newspaper. This is a forward movement from the present situation in which the burden of disclosure is on candidates through mandatory affidavits filed along with their nomination papers.

The latest order is in line with a series of judgments aimed at preserving the purity of the election process: directions to ensure the asset disclosure and criminal records of candidates, the

incorporation of the 'none of the above' option in the voting machine, and the invalidation of a clause that protected sitting legislators from immediate disqualification after conviction. In addition, the Court has directed the establishment of special courts in all States for the quick disposal of cases involving elected representatives. However, it must be underscored that de-criminalisation of politics cannot be achieved by judicial fiat alone. The political class has to respond to the challenge. Parties would probably justify their choice of candidates by pointing out that the law now bars only those convicted and not those facing charges, however serious they may be. Besides, they are apt to dismiss all pending cases as "politically motivated". A legislative option is to amend the law to bar from contest those against whom charges have been framed. A more meaningful option would be for parties to refrain from giving ticket to such candidates. Beyond this debate, a larger question looms: what good will more information on the background of candidates do, if voters back a particular leader or party without reference to the record of the candidates fielded?

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **candidacy** (noun) – the state/condition/fact of being a candidate, particularly in an election; candidate-ship.
- **de-criminalisation** (noun) – the process of making something as a legal/legitimate one.
- **fiat** (noun) – order, decree, command, diktat.
- **taint** (noun) – trace, hint, tinge (of a bad quality).
- **criminality** (noun) – the state/condition of being criminal.
- **in this regard** (phrase) – in connection with the aspect/consideration/point referred earlier.
- **ought to** (modal verb) – must, should.
- **cleanse** (verb) – rid, clear, free, purify, purge (something unpleasant/bad).
- **precious little** (phrase) – very little (to emphasis something).
- **reluctance** (noun) – unwillingness, disinclination, hesitation.
- **antecedent** (noun) – past, background, record, history.
- **sought** past and past participle of seek (verb) – try, attempt, aim.
- **alarming** (adjective) – worrying, disturbing, shocking/distressing.
- **come up with** (phrasal verb) – submit/suggest, propose, put forward.
- **contempt of court** (noun) – the offense of being disobedient to or disrespectful toward a court of law and its officers in the form of behaviour that opposes or defies the authority, justice and dignity of the court.
- **with reference to** (phrase) – in relation to, as regards, with respect to, on the subject of.
- **merit** (noun) – quality, level, worthiness/goodness.
- **bar** (verb) – block, ban, exclude.
- **merely** (adverb) – only, simply, just.
- **winnability** (noun) – a capacity/ability for winning.
- **affidavit** (noun) – sworn statement, self attestation, self declaration (of a person).
- **in line with** (phrase) – in alignment with, in accordance with.
- **clause** (noun) – term, condition, provision, requirement.
- **conviction** (noun) – sentence, judgement, verdict.
- **disposal** (noun) – getting rid of, discarding/jettisoning, scrapping.
- **underscore** (verb) – underline, emphasize, highlight.
- **point out** (phrasal verb) – identify, recognize, draw attention to, mention.
- **convicted** (adjective) – declared guilty of a crime.
- **apt** (adjective) – smart, intelligent, clever.
- **refrain from** (verb) – stop oneself, abstain, desist from, hold back.

- **loom** (verb) – emerge, appear, become visible.
- **back** (verb) – support, endorse, uphold.

Dual citizenship: on regularising stay of Sri Lankan refugees

With no legal scope for it, govt. must think of regularising stay of Sri Lankan refugees

The contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, has again triggered an ill-advised demand for dual citizenship to Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka. This refuses to leave public discourse despite the constitutional and legal position being clearly against the grant of dual citizenship per se. As on date, no Indian citizen holds the citizenship of any other country. Even when the Centre amended the Citizenship Act in 2003 to introduce the Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) scheme for sections of the Indian diaspora, all it provided was a limited version of 'dual citizenship' which came without political rights and with a bar on purchase of agricultural land. It would defy logic, then, to seek dual citizenship for those who are not Indian nationals. The Centre has consistently favoured voluntary repatriation of refugees to Sri Lanka. Given the possible effect on the demographic mix there, New Delhi, quite rightly, is not in a mood to confer Indian citizenship on them. Although the Central and State governments do a lot to make the refugees' stay comfortable, most of them are regarded as illegal migrants, as they arrived with no valid travel documents. In the run-up to the 2016 Assembly elections, the then Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Jayalalithaa, flagged the issue of dual citizenship. Since then, representations have been made regularly to the Centre. Governor Banwarilal Purohit too referred to the demand in his Assembly address last month. Early this month, the government told the Rajya Sabha that neither the Constitution nor the CAA permitted dual citizenship. This ought to put an end to the debate, which will otherwise create false expectations among the refugees.

At the same time, given the need to treat the refugees in a humane manner and in the absence of a law on refugees, the Centre should stop seeing Sri Lankan refugees as "illegal migrants"; they entered India with the knowledge and approval of Indian authorities. As for those who wish to remain in India for studies or to earn a livelihood, the authorities should tweak the OCI Cardholder scheme or offer an exclusive long-term visa. By this, the stay of 95,000-odd refugees in Tamil Nadu will be regularised. As for those keen on returning home but are unable to do so for want of support from Sri Lanka, New Delhi should lean on Colombo to help enable their early return. Besides, the two countries should formulate a scheme of structured assistance to expedite voluntary repatriation, which is moving at a snail's pace even a decade after the civil war ended. These steps can lead to a lasting resolution of issues concerning those who have been in India for over 30 years.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **regularise** (verb) – establish, recognize, confirm something officially (something which is a temporary arrangement till date).
- **refugee** (noun) – displaced person, asylum seeker, escapee/exile.
- **contentious** (adjective) – controversial, disputable, debatable.
- **ill-advised** (adjective) – ill-considered, misguided, injudicious.
- **discourse** (noun) – discussion, debate, talk; argument.

- **per se** (adverb) – (Latin) in itself, of itself, as such, intrinsically.
- **diaspora** (noun) – the people who spread/scatter from their own country to places across the world.
- **bar** (noun) – ban, prohibition, restriction.
- **seek** (verb) – ask for, request, call on, appeal for.
- **favour** (verb) – support, recommend/advise, advocate.
- **repatriation** (noun) – the act of sending people/something to their own country.
- **demographic** (adjective) – relating to the statistical study/structure of populations, especially human beings.
- **confer** (verb) – grant, provide, give.
- **run-up to** (noun) – a period of time just before an important event.
- **flag** (verb) – indicate, identify, point out.
- **representations** (noun) – formal statements (sent to the authority in order to express opinion/objection).
- **address** (noun) – speak, talk, discourse.
- **ought to** (modal verb) – must, should.
- **put an end to** (phrase) – stop, terminate, abolish.
- **humane** (adjective) – compassionate, considerate, sympathetic, tolerant.
- **livelihood** (noun) – source of income, means of support, living, subsistence.
- **tweak** (verb) – adjust, modify, alter.
- **keen on** (adjective) – interested in.
- **for want of** (phrase) – due to lack of something.
- **lean on** (phrasal verb) – compel, put pressure on, force; depend on, rely on.
- **structured** (adjective) – (of a plan/policy) arranged, organized officially.
- **expedite** (verb) – speed up, accelerate, quicken.
- **snail's pace** (phrase) – very slowly; at a very slow speed.
- **lasting** (adjective) – long-lasting, long-term, permanent.

Keep up the pressure: decision by FATF on Pakistan

The international community must continue to hold Pakistan to account on terrorism

The decision by global watchdog, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), at its plenary in Paris last week, to keep Pakistan on its "greylist" for monitoring its record against terror financing was no surprise. While the Pakistan government has yet to complete the 27-point action plan it was given in June 2018, it has, according to the FATF, made some progress. As a result, the 39-member group that includes India decided to extend Pakistan's September 2019 deadline until June 2020. Actions Pakistan still needs to carry out include tightening security and banking restrictions to block loopholes through which designated groups including the Taliban, al-Qaeda, Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad access funding. It also calls on Pakistan to begin prosecutions against terrorists and sanction entities that are flouting the UNSC's rules for designated terror organisations. The FATF Chairman's final comment says Pakistan must comply with all 27-action points — it has cleared about 14 — in the next four months or face financial strictures by being placed on the "blacklist". Pakistan is one of 18 countries on the greylist; Iran and North Korea are on the blacklist.

The FATF's sharp language is significant, yet according to the force's consensus rules, Pakistan believes it might be able to slip through the deadlines if it is able to ensure that three countries, China, Turkey and Malaysia, which have pledged support, veto any move to blacklist it. Pakistan also appears to have benefited from playing a role in U.S.-Taliban talks as it seems the U.S. and its allies are not enforcing the deadline to complete the action plan as before. A senior U.S. official's statement in January welcoming Pakistan's progress in its FATF commitments may have set the stage for the final plenary decision. While the FATF's Chairman's wording was strong, it was a repetition of the threat he served Pakistan last year, and there is a danger that Pakistan, a country that has not sustained punitive action against thousands of designated terrorists and entities, will feel immunity from the process. The Pakistani court's hurried conviction of LeT chief Hafiz Saeed on terror financing charges just before the Paris meet appeared to be a command performance, and its shocking submission to the FATF that it cannot trace Masood Azhar must be scrutinised further by the international body. Among other issues on the agenda during U.S. President Trump's India visit, it is necessary that India raises the need to continue to hold Pakistan to account on terror, and not flag in attention just when the FATF process has begun to extract results from Islamabad.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **keep up** (phrasal verb) – continue, maintain, persist, carry on/go on with.
- **hold someone to account** (phrase) – to require a person to explain or to accept responsibility for his or her actions; to blame or punish someone for what has occurred.
- **watchdog** (noun) – inspector/supervisor, observer, ombudsman.
- **plenary** (noun) – assembly, conference, meeting.
- **grey/watch list** (noun) – a list of countries on observation due to their "strategic deficiencies" in countering terror-financing and money-laundering. The countries put on grey/watch list by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) will be subjected to direct monitoring and intense scrutiny by the International Co-operation Review Group (ICRG) on terror financing.
- **carry out** (phrasal verb) – conduct, perform, execute.
- **loophole** (noun) – an ambiguity in the law; flaw/fault, defect.
- **call on** (phrasal verb) – appeal to, demand, ask, request.
- **prosecution** (noun) – legal action/trial, legal proceeding, litigation.
- **sanction** (verb) – punish, prohibit, put restriction on.
- **flout** (verb) – disobey, break, violate.
- **designated** (adjective) – classified, labelled, identified.
- **comply with** (verb) – abide by, adhere to, conform to.
- **stricture** (noun) – constraint, restriction, limitation, restraint.
- **blacklist** (noun) – a list of countries which the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) judges to be non-cooperative in the global fight against money laundering and terrorist financing.
- **consensus** (noun) – an idea or opinion that is shared by all the people in a group. agreement, concurrence.
- **slip through** (phrasal verb) – pass through, escape (without being noticed), to fail to be noticed.
- **pledge** (verb) – promise/swear, give one's word; give an assurance.
- **veto** (verb) – reject, dismiss; prohibit/block.
- **set the stage for** (phrase) – prepare the circumstances for beginning of something.
- **sustain** (verb) – continue, carry on, keep up.
- **punitive** (adjective) – disciplinary, corrective, retributive.
- **immunity** (noun) – impunity, exemption/freedom from punishment, special treatment.
- **conviction** (noun) – sentence, judgement, verdict.
- **command performance** (noun) – something done at the request/order of someone.
- **submission** (noun) – suggestion, proposition, recommendation; statement/assertion/claim.
- **scrutinise** (verb) – examine carefully, inspect; investigate.

- **flag** (verb) – indicate, identify, point out.
- **extract** (verb) – obtain by force, wrest, exact, squeeze out.

Asleep at the wheel: On Tiruppur road accident

The Tiruppur accident shows that the Centre and States are yet to take road safety seriously

Even in a country inured to death and mayhem on its roads everyday, Thursday's crash that killed 19 bus passengers on a national highway, at Tiruppur, Tamil Nadu, comes as a shock. Every day, thousands board government-run and private buses for inter-city travel, placing their lives in the hands of transport operators and the authorities whose duty it is to guarantee road safety. Unfortunately, Central and State officials feel little compulsion to do their duty when it comes to road safety. Those whose lives were snuffed out on the journey from Bengaluru to Ernakulam in a Kerala government bus should not become faceless additions to the list of fatalities on Indian roads. In 2018, that toll was a staggering 1,51,417 lives. A preliminary inquiry points to human error involving the container lorry driver who is suspected to have fallen asleep at the wheel. The probe is also looking at whether the container was overloaded, and lacked an assistant. It is reasonable to assume that a helper would alert a driver to danger. Whatever the proximate factors, the Tiruppur crash highlights the gap that India must bridge before it can hope to bring down road fatalities by at least half during the current decade. In fact, India is committed to achieving such a reduction under the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals, and the promise was reiterated by Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari recently, at the Third Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety, at Stockholm.

In spite of amendments made to the Motor Vehicles Act, and new engineering standards enforced for vehicle safety, the risk on the roads is on the rise. State governments responsible for enforcement remain apathetic and their derelict bureaucracies ignore safety laws in cities and highways. The cost of such indifference is borne by families of victims in the form of bereavement, loss of income and enduring trauma. Moreover, the economy is deprived of productivity and output. The latest World Bank assessment of India's loss from road accidents, which was released at the Stockholm meet, points out that road users between 18-45 years constitute 69% of fatalities. Also, 54% of deaths and serious injuries occur mainly among vulnerable groups: pedestrians, cyclists and two-wheeler riders. In the Bank's estimate, it will take an additional \$109-billion of investment in 10 years to achieve a 50% reduction in road deaths. Mr. Gadkari has focused on removing dangerous 'black spots' on highways, making consultants and contractors liable for road conditions, and imposing stiffer penalties for traffic offences. The amended MV Act makes all this possible, but many State governments have balked at enforcing it. It is imperative that the Centre forms an empowered Road Safety Board at the national level to advise States on all related concerns as envisaged under the MV Act, and makes State enforcement agencies accountable for safety.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **asleep at the wheel** (phrase) – not paying attention; not attentive; not alert.
- **inure (to)** (verb) – to accustom to something (undesirable/unpleasant). ("be accustomed to" means "be used to").
- **mayhem** (noun) – chaos, disorder, turmoil, havoc.
- **come as a shock** (phrase) – to make someone feel shocked.
- **inter-** (prefix) – between.

- **place something in the hands of someone** (phrase) – to make someone responsible for handling something.
- **snuff out** (phrasal verb) – kill (in a sudden manner).
- **faceless** (verb) – anonymous, unidentified, unknown.
- **fatality** (verb) – death, casualty, mortality/loss.
- **staggering** (adjective) – astonishing, shocking, surprising.
- **point to** (verb) – indicate, suggest, denote.
- **fall asleep** (phrase) – to begin/start sleeping.
- **at the wheel** (noun) – (while) driving.
- **look at** (phrasal verb) – inspect, review, analyse, scrutinize.
- **proximate** (adjective) – nearest, closest, next to, close.
- **bridge the gap** (phrase) – to connect two disconnected or dissimilar things in a logical way (in order to resolve the problem).
- **bring down** (phrasal verb) – decrease, reduce, lower/cut.
- **sustainable** (adjective) – legitimate/reasonable, sensible, trustworthy.
- **reiterate** (verb) – repeat, say again, restate.
- **on the rise** (phrase) – increasing; becoming successful.
- **enforcement** (noun) – imposition, implementation, execution.
- **apathetic** (adjective) – indifferent, uninterested, unresponsive.
- **derelict** (adjective) – neglectful, careless, irresponsible.
- **bureaucracy** (noun) – officials (in the administration, government, the establishment) as a group.
- **cost** (noun) – loss, penalty, suffering/damage, disadvantage.
- **indifference** (noun) – unconcern, apathy, carelessness, disregard, unresponsiveness.
- **borne** past participle of bear (verb) – experience, undergo, go through, suffer, endure.
- **bereavement** (noun) – loss, deprivation, grief, sorrow, sadness; death in the family, loss, demise.
- **trauma** (noun) – torment, distress, suffering.
- **deprive of** (verb) – dispossess, strip of, deny, prevent from having.
- **point out** (phrasal verb) – identify, recognize, draw attention to, mention.
- **constitute** (verb) – amount to, account for, form/comprise.
- **vulnerable** (adjective) – unsafe, unprotected, unguarded.
- **pedestrian** (noun) – walker, person on foot, wayfarer.
- **black spot** (noun) – accident prone location; a place where road traffic accidents have historically been concentrated.
- **liable** (adjective) – responsible, answerable, accountable.
- **stiffer** (comparative adjective) of stiff (adjective) – harsh, severe, punitive, stringent.
- **offence** (noun) – an illegal act, crime, misconduct/wrongdoing.
- **balk** (verb) – eschew, resist, refuse, be reluctant to, be unwilling to (to accept).
- **imperative** (adjective) – vitally important, crucial/critical, essential.
- **empowered** (adjective) – authorized, allowed, entitled.
- **envisage** (verb) – foresee, predict, forecast.

☞ “NEVER STOP LEARNING, BECAUSE LIFE NEVER STOPS TEACHING.” ☞