

IRRESPONSIBLE REMARKS**Courts must remain wary of political moves to undermine the judiciary**

Remarks made by a Minister in Uttar Pradesh that the construction of a temple in the disputed site at Ayodhya is a certainty because “the Supreme Court is ours” cannot be dismissed as mere political zeal displayed by a party committed to the cause. It reveals a disconcerting cockiness that those in power tend to display when they believe that courts have to defer to those with an electoral majority. “The construction of a Ram temple is our resolve. The Supreme Court is ours, the judiciary, the country and the temple are ours,” is what the Minister for Cooperatives, Mukut Bihari Verma, is reported to have said. It is reassuring to note that the Bench, which is hearing a set of appeals against the decree passed by the Allahabad High Court in the title suits, condemned the remarks, as soon as its attention was drawn to them. Such irresponsible utterances must be quite annoying to the judges, and unforgivably embarrassing when they come from prominent members of the ruling party at the Centre. The court has said its reservations would be recorded in the order, which means that it will not let this brazen claim consume its valuable time. Mr. Verma has sought to clarify that when he said the court was “ours”, he did not mean that the government “owns the court”, but only that the court belongs to everyone and that it reflected his faith in the top Court. It is quite unconvincing as his claim of control over the judiciary was made in the context of the party’s resolve to construct the temple.

It would be in order if the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister took cognisance of his Minister’s remarks and initiated appropriate action against him. However, given the Bharatiya Janata Party’s fanatical commitment to the cause of building the temple at the site in which frenzied mobs had pulled down the Babri Masjid, it is unlikely that any such action would be forthcoming. The hearing in the Ayodhya appeals in the Supreme Court has been going on for weeks. In Lucknow, the trial court is making slow progress in the criminal case against those who demolished the mosque. In this backdrop, any attempt to create an atmosphere of fear or influence the proceedings will have to be viewed seriously. Earlier this month, the Supreme Court Bench ordered notice to a Chennai-based octogenarian who had allegedly written to senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan, hurling curses on him for representing a Muslim party in the dispute. Mr. Dhavan has spoken about facing threats, ridicule and intimidating behaviour. While welcoming the court’s assurance that the parties can advance their arguments without fear, it would be in order to underscore that it should remain vigilant against attempts to undermine its role in adjudicating this dispute. After all, the quarters from which these irresponsible utterances come do not consider the fact of being in office a restraining factor.

Words

Wary

Undermine

Dispute

Dismiss

Kind

Adj.

Verb

Verb

Verb

Meaning

Cautious, careful, circumspect, chary, prudent

Subvert, sabotage, threaten, weaken, impair

Quarrel, argue, squabble

Banish, send away, abandon, disregard, shrug off

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|--------------|------|---|
| Committed | Adj. | Devoted, faithful, pledged, dedicated |
| Reveal | Verb | Disclose, evince, betray, divulge, inform on |
| Disconcert | Verb | Unsettle, nonplus, discomfit, unnerve, perturb |
| Cockiness | Noun | Overly, self confidence |
| Defer to | | Agree with, go along with, acquiesce in |
| Electoral | Adj. | Relating to election |
| Resolve | Verb | Settle, solve, find a solution to, fix, rectify, reconcile |
| Decree | Noun | Order, diktat, injunction, bidding, behest |
| Condemn | Verb | Rebuke, reprimand, blame, arraign, assail |
| Utterance | Noun | Saying, speaking, expression, articulation |
| Annoy | Verb | Irritate, vex, disgruntle, nettle, embitter |
| Embarrass | Verb | Shame, humiliate, demean, abash |
| Prominent | Adj. | Important, pre-eminent, notable |
| Unconvincing | Adj. | Improbable, unlikely, implausible |
| Cognizance | Noun | Knowledge, ken, awareness, apprehension |
| Initiate | Verb | Begin, start off, commence, usher in |
| Fanatical | Adj. | Zealous, extremist, extreme, dogmatic, sectarian, radical, diehard |
| Commitment | Noun | Dedication, devotion, allegiance, fidelity |
| Frenzied | Adj. | Frantic, frenetic, fraught, feverish, maniac |
| Mob | Noun | Crowd, horde, multitude, rabble, throng |
| Pull down | Verb | Destroy, demolish, dismantle, lay waste, decimate |
| Proceedings | Noun | Reports, events, annals, going on, doings |
| Octogenarian | Noun | A person of eighty years old |
| Demolish | Verb | Destroy, disassemble, ruin, dismantle |
| Allege | Verb | Claim, assert, declare, over, avow, insinuate |
| Hurl | Verb | Throw, toss, fling, lob, shy, pitch |
| Curse | Noun | Route way, tack, track, trajectory |
| Dispute | Noun | Argument, altercation, dissension, falling out quarrelling, squabbling, row, velitation |
| Ridicule | Noun | Mockery, derision, laughter, scorn, scoffing |
| Intimidating | Adj. | Frightning, overawing, threatening |
| Vigilant | Adj. | Watchful, observant, attentive, keen eyed, alert on the qui vive |
| Adjudicate | Verb | Judge, adjudge, try, arbitrate, decide on, resolve Determine |
| Utterances | Noun | Remarks, comments, statement, expression |
| Ruminate | Verb | Think about, contemplate, consider, meditate on |
| Restrain | Verb | Constrain, curb, thwart, staunch, retard |

BANE OF BANNERS

Illegal hoardings put up by politicians have become a threat to road users

The pervasive lack of governance in India's cities has claimed the life of another citizen, this time in Chennai. A banner put up on a road divider by a functionary of the AIADMK to celebrate a wedding fell on a young woman riding a two-wheeler, sending her off-balance and under a tanker lorry. Subasri, 22, joins the list of hapless citizens whose lives were ended by civic neglect, police indifference, and, in Tamil Nadu especially, a political culture that dominates public spaces through exaggerated

displays of cutouts, crude arches and flags at the cost of safety. Only two years ago, Raghu, a young engineer, died under similar circumstances in Coimbatore and another youth, Babu, was electrocuted in Udthagamandalam when he touched a party flag that was in contact with a wire; both instances involved ramshackle structures placed along roads. That political parties of all hues and motley groups see no need for restraint, even after many directions from the Madras High Court to stop endangering public safety goes to show that there are no serious consequences. Evidently, they are not persuaded by the orders issued in February this year by a division bench, impleading 11 political parties and reminding them of its many earlier orders that prohibit threats to public safety through banners and boards. The government must fix accountability and make individual members of the executive liable for lack of public safety.

There are disturbing aspects to the official response to the incident in Chennai, and the inquiry must go into the reported reluctance of the police to proceed against the AIADMK member who was responsible for the banners being put up. The Revenue Department and the local body must explain their failure to prohibit the dangerous structures, when there are clear orders in force, and acts of omission and commission should attract strong action. Even two years ago, the Madras High Court had ruled in a case that “the erection of arches, placards and display boards, banners with poles, etc., abutting into public streets and pavements, which obstruct free and safe movement of traffic or free and safe movement of pedestrians or obstructs visibility of drivers is patently illegal.” It is clear, therefore, that even where limited permissions could be given, the structures cannot affect public safety. Considering the long history of illegal political banners and religious displays, often involving theft of electricity, the court can bring about compliance with the law through a special panel, similar to the Supreme Court’s committee on road safety headed by a retired judge. Strong action is needed against recalcitrant politicians and lumpen groups who use banners as displays of power or fealty.

| <u>Words</u> | <u>Kind</u> | <u>Meaning</u> |
|--------------|-------------|---|
| Bane | Noun | Scourge, ruin, death, plague, ruination |
| Threat | Noun | Threatening, remark, warning, menace, ultimatum |
| Pervasive | Adj. | Prevalent, extensive, ubiquitous, permeating, high and Low |
| Celebrate | Verb | Commemorate, perform, solemnize, ceremonialized |
| Hapless | Adj. | Unfortunate, unlucky, ill starred, jinxed |
| Civic | Adj. | Municipal, city, urban, metropolitan |
| Indifference | Adj. | Lack of interest, carelessness, obliviousness |
| Exaggerated | Adj. | Aggrandized, over written, fancied, ornate Magniloquent, grandiloquent |
| Arches | Noun | Archway, vault, span, dome |
| Electrocute | Verb | Injure / kill (someone), by electric shock |
| Ramshackle | Adj. | Tumble down, dilapidated, delict, ruinous, decrepit crumbling |
| Hues | Noun | Complexion, nuance, type, nature, character |
| Motley | Adj. | Miscellaneous, disparate, diverse, sundry |

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|----------------|------|--|
| Consequences | Noun | Results, upshots, repercussions, aftermaths |
| Persuade | Verb | Instil, prod, exhort, stimulate, encourage |
| Prohibit | Verb | Proscribe, prevent, forbid |
| Accountability | Noun | Responsibility, liability, answerability, obedience |
| Disturb | Verb | Perturb, disarrange, muddle, interfere with |
| Reluctance | Noun | Unwillingness, disinclination |
| Proceed | Verb | Begin, make a start, get going, move ahead |
| Erection | Noun | Construction, putting up, assembly, fabrication |
| Pavement | Noun | Footpath, walk way, side walk, kerb, footway |
| Pedestrian | Noun | Walker, hiker, rambler, stroller |
| Pedestrian | Adj. | Dull, plodding, boring, tedious, monotonous, tiresome weary some |
| Patent | Noun | Copy right, license, legal protection, character |
| Recalcitrant | Adj. | Uncooperative, disobedient, defiant, refractory Perverse, obdurate |
| Lumpen | Adj. | Of low social class and stupid or not educated |
| Faalty | Noun | Loyalty, fidelity, allegiance, devotion, piety |
| Espionage | Noun | Spying, surveillance, reconnaissance, eavesdropping Infiltration |
| Blasphemy | Noun | Profanity, profaneness, sacrilege, impiety irreligiousness, irreverence |
| Specious | Adj. | Misleading, deceptive, false, fallacious, sophistic Casuistic |
| Duel | Verb | Fight (between two), scuffle, confront, brawl |
| Array | Verb | Arrange, assemble, display, place, position |
| Faculty | Noun | Power, capability, capacity, potentiality, propensity where withal |
| Apex | Noun | Tip, peak, summit, pinnacle, top, crest |