

A SOUND REVIEW**Supreme Court's order on anti-atrocities law is a caution against entering legislative domain**

After last year's amendments aimed at nullifying the effect of a Supreme Court judgment that was seen as diluting the law against atrocities on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the apex court's decision recalling the earlier verdict may not appear very significant. However, the latest order by a three-judge Bench on the Centre's petition seeking a review is more than a mere academic exercise. Its sound reasoning and sympathetic reconsideration have fortified the legislative measure to restore the law on atrocities committed on Dalits as originally conceived by Parliament. The March 2018 decision laid down three new rules as safeguards against the Act's possible misuse: that the bar on anticipatory bail under Section 18 need not prevent courts from granting advance bail; that a person can be arrested only if the "appointing authority" (in the case of a public servant) or the SP (in the case of others) approves such arrest; and that there should be a preliminary enquiry into all complaints. It caused an uproar among Dalits, and a nation-wide protest in August last year turned violent in some places. There was political clamour for Parliament's intervention to restore the anti-atrocities law to its original rigour. That the Bench declined to stay its own order when a review was sought spurred the government into action.

There was widespread criticism then that the BJP's perceived espousal of upper caste interests and its weak submissions in court had led to the verdict. It was even argued that the Centre was under political compulsion to undo the perception that the interests of the SCs and STs were in danger. The court's re-examination, on the contrary, is anchored in sound principles. It first underscores that special laws for the protection of SC and ST communities flow from social realities, the discrimination they still face and the circumstances that preclude them from mustering the courage to lodge a complaint in the first place. The court assails the assumption that SC/ST members are more likely to give false complaints than the general population (as evidenced by the fact that there is no preliminary enquiry or prior sanction for arrest envisaged for other complaints). In other words, the additional "safeguards" against the alleged abuse of law by Dalits is another form of discrimination, the court has pointed out. Further, it rejects the idea of treating Dalits as people prone to lodging false complaints. The directions for getting an authority's sanction for arrest or holding a preliminary enquiry for this class of cases alone are extra-statutory, and clearly amount to the judiciary engaging in legislation. The review is a timely reminder that the top court's power to pass any order required to uphold justice cannot be used to give directives contrary to existing laws or to supplant them altogether.

Words**Kind****Meaning**

Misery

Noun

Affliction, misfortune, distress, unhappiness

Drought

Noun

Dry spell, dry period, lack of rain

Struggle	Verb	Fight, grapple, wrestle, scuffle, brawl
Afloat	Adj.	Buoyant, floating, buoyed up, suspended
Distress	Noun	Anguish, suffering, pain, agony, affliction
Paralyse	Verb	Disable, immobilize, incapacitate
Affluent	Adj.	Prosperous, wealthy, rich, well off
Upscale	Verb	Increase the size, augment, embellish
Rescue	Verb	Save, extricate
Plight	Noun	Quandary, quagmire, misery, predicament
Struggle	Verb	Fight, grapple, scuffle, brawl, spar
Overhang	Noun	Stick out, stand out, extend, protrude
Consensus	Noun	Agreement, harmony, concord, concurrenu, consent
Alarming	Adj.	Worrying, disturbing
Co-ordinate	Verb	Harmonize, correlate, interrelate, synchronize
Efforts	Noun	Attempt, try, endeavour, labour
Ambitious	Noun	Aspiration, intention, goal, intent, vocation
Ignore	Verb	Disregard, take notice of, Passover, snub, spurn
Durability	Noun	Imperishability, permanence, longevity, toughness
Adaptation	Noun	Converting, conversion, modification, reshaping
Sap	Verb	Erode, wear away, deplete, wear down, reduce
Vitality	Noun	Liveliness, life, energy, animation, bounce
Convention	Noun	Agreement, accord, protocol, compact, concordant
Locate	Verb	Situate, site, position, place, establish
Threat	Noun	Warning, ultimatum, combination, menace
Ecology	Noun	The branch of biology concerned with the relations between organisms and their environment
Vegetate	Verb	Languish, laze, degenerate, stagnate
Infrastructure	Noun	Features of a system
Co-ordination	Noun	Harmonize, correlate, interrelate, synchronize, dovetail
Propel	Verb	Spur, drive, prompt, precipitate, catapult motivate, force, impel
Leeway	Noun	Freedom, elbowroom, latitude, emancipation
Sacrifice	Noun	Offer up, immolate, slaughter
Ostentatious	Adj.	Showy, pretentious, conspicuous, gaudy, obtrusive, flamboyant

RAINING MISERY**Better infrastructure for water management to break the droughts, floods cycle is needed**

If Bihar is struggling to stay afloat in the ongoing monsoon, its distress can be traced to poor infrastructure and a lack of administrative preparedness. Even large parts of the capital, Patna, have been paralysed without power and communications, as the State government tries to drain its streets of water, and critical rations are distributed by boat and helicopter. The rain has not spared the more affluent residents either; those living in upscale localities including the Deputy Chief Minister, Sushil Kumar Modi, have been rescued. But the plight of people in a dozen other districts, many of them struggling with underdevelopment, is much worse. Across Bihar, there has been a significant loss of life and property. Scenes of similar distress have been reported from some other States as well, notably eastern Uttar Pradesh. The monsoon is expected to withdraw after October 10, more than a month behind normal, and its overhang is consistent with the prevalent scientific view on the effects of a changing climate: extreme rainfall and drought occurring at an increased frequency. Normal patterns will become less common in coming years, according to the current consensus. This alarming outlook calls for a far-sighted national response, with the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, given the responsibility of coordinating the efforts of other Ministries in charge of housing, urban and rural development, water management, and agriculture, as well as State governments.

Indian cities are attracting heavy investments in several spheres, but State and municipal administrations have not matched their ambitions for development with capacity building and infrastructure creation. They must focus on ensuring the safety of citizens and durability of economic assets. Ignoring urban planning and adaptation is proving costly, and losses are sapping the vitality of the economy. In its Cities and Climate Change report, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change pointed to flooding as a key danger, apart from drought and heat islands. This is particularly true of urban centres through which rivers flow — such as Patna — and are often located on the coast, facing the additional threat of cyclones. India's cities should work towards solutions that use engineering and ecology to contain the excess water from rain and put it to good use. This could be in the form of new lakes and bioswales, which are vegetated channels to manage rainwater. There is no better time to create such green infrastructure than today, as water management is a priority programme of the NDA government. States should be able to find financial and technical linkages to put up flood-handling structures. In Bihar's case, coordination with Nepal to track monsoon flows is also vital, since big Gangetic rivers originate in the Himalayan region.

Words

Atrocity
Caution
Domain
Dilute

Kind

Noun
Noun
Noun
Verb

Meaning

Barbarity, brutality, enormity, butrage
Care, carefulness, wariness, awareness, heed
Realm, kingdom, empire, estate, province
Diminish, weaken, reduce, thin out,

Apex	Noun	Tip, peak, summit, climax, culmination
Verdict	Noun	Judgement, adjudication, decision, finding
Significant	Adj.	Notable, noteworthy, outstanding, important
Seek	Verb	Request, solicit, call on, entreat
Academic	Adj.	Theoretical, conceptual, notional
Sympathetic	Adj.	Commiserating, commiserative, pitying
Fortify	Verb	Secure, protect, embattle, rampart, bolster
Restore	Verb	Reinstate, put back, reinstitute, re-impose
Conceive	Verb	Think up, come up with, devise, formulate
Safeguard	Verb	Protect, defend, shield, guard
Plausible	Adj.	Possible, feasible, tangible, viable
Anticipatory	Adj.	Expectant, apprehensive, provident
Prevent	Verb	Proscribe, prohibit, avert, block, intercept
Arrest	Verb	Apprehend, seize, take in, pull in, haul in
Supplant	Verb	Replace, displace, supersede, usurp
Approve	Verb	Accept, agree to, consent to, assent to, endorse
Uproar	Noun	Turmoil, disorder, confusion, chaos, commotion
Violent	Adj.	Brutal, vicious, savage, aggressive, bullying
Clamour	Noun	Din, racket, boos, uproar, screaming, babel
Intervention	Noun	Involvement, intercession, interposition, arbitration, conciliation
Rigour	Noun	Strictness, severity, sternness, austericity, savagery, rigidity
Decline	Verb	Decrease, reduce, reject, repudiate
Spur	Noun	Stimulus, incentive, encouragement, stimulant
Perceive	Noun	The ability to see, hear
Contrary	Noun	Opposite, contradictory, apposed, clashing
Anchor	Verb	Presenter, announcer, broadcaster
Discriminatory	Adj.	Prejudicial, biased, unfair
Circumstances	Noun	Situation, condition, position, event
Preclude	Verb	Prevent, stop, prohibit, proscribe
Muster	Verb	Assemble, bring, together, marshal, mobilize, gather, raise