

Probing the police: On killing of Hyderabad rape-murder accused

Judicial inquiry into the rape suspects' killing should not undermine the criminal probe

In ordering a judicial inquiry into the killing of the four suspects arrested for the rape and murder of a veterinarian near Hyderabad, the Supreme Court has paved the way for a probe that might command greater credibility than a routine police investigation. However, the necessity for such an inquiry has not been clearly established. The court notes a peculiar feature of the FIR registered by the Telangana police and taken up for investigation by a Special Investigation Team. The FIR contains IPC sections and Arms Act provisions that relate to the offences by the four accused in snatching weapons from the police and trying to kill them, while attempting to flee from custody. The court rightly questions how dead men could be investigated and prosecuted. Even though there is a claim that the SIT would investigate the cause of the deaths, it was possibly right on the court's part to doubt whether the police were genuine about establishing whether there really was an 'encounter'. Further, the order underscores that the suspects were in the legal custody of the police when the incident took place, implying that it was primarily a 'custodial death' and one that was yet to be established as an 'encounter' — the latter being a term that can be used only when the police or any other security force is unexpectedly faced with armed adversaries. To the extent that the court felt impelled to get to the bottom of the incident, its intervention is unexceptionable.

However, what is surprising is that the top court took up the matter when the Telangana High Court was seized of it. The High Court had done well to pass orders to preserve the bodies, and to video-graph the autopsy — the footage of which should be handed over to a district judge. There was nothing to suggest that the High Court would not have ensured an impartial police investigation, especially when it was going by the guidelines issued by the Supreme Court in 2014 in *PUCL vs. State of Maharashtra*. Yet, without any finding that the proceedings before the High Court were ineffective, the top court has ordered a probe by a three-member commission. It has also stayed the probe by the National Human Rights Commission, possibly because it wanted to avoid any parallel inquiry. If at all it felt the need for an independent probe, the Supreme Court could have monitored the police investigation or transferred it to another agency. Instead, it has chosen the Commission of Inquiry route, and given six months for the panel to come out with its findings. It would be unfortunate if this has the unintended consequence of the police waiting for the commission's findings and going slow on the criminal investigation. After all, regular investigation based on the criminal procedure is always better than *ad hoc* enquiries that are mere fact-finding exercises.

Words

Suspect

Undermine

Pave the way for

Command

Kind

Noun

Verb

Phrase

Verb

Meaning

Suspected person, accused.

Weaken, spoil, damage.

Prepare for, clear/open the way for, usher in.

Receive, be given, get/gain, obtain.

Credibility	Noun	Trustworthiness, reliability, integrity.
Necessity	Noun	Essential requirement, prerequisite, indispensable item/thing
Peculiar	Adj.	Strange, unusual/odd, unexpected.
Take up for	Phrasal verb	Accept, agree to, accede to.
Provision	Noun	Term, clause, requirement.
Offence	Noun	An illegal act, crime, misconduct/wrongdoing.
Snatch	Verb	Grab, capture, take hold of; steal by grabbing something suddenly
Flee	Verb	Escape, abscond, run away/take flight.
Underscore	Verb	Underline, emphasize, highlight.
Imply	Verb	Say indirectly, suggest, hint.
Primarily	Adv.	Especially, particularly, mainly.
Adversary	Noun	Rival, enemy, nemesis/opponent.
To the extent	Phrase	In a substantial way; largely.
Impel	Verb	Drive, prompt/force, demand.
Get to the bottom of	Phrase	Find an origin, source, basis of something.
Unexceptionable	Adj.	Reasonable, satisfactory, unremarkable.
Be seized of	Verb	(legal term) be in legal possession of.
Autopsy	Noun	Post-mortem.
Impartial	Adj.	Unbiased, unprejudiced, neutral, fair.
Proceeding	Noun	Legal action, lawsuit, action.
Unintended	Adj.	Not planned; ill-advised, ill-considered.
Consequence	Noun	Outcome, ramification, repercussion.
Ad hoc	Adj.	When necessary/needed (after something unpleasant /bad thing happened), emergency, makeshift, Improvised

Many mutinies: On protests against amended citizenship law

The Citizenship Amendment Act may have opened up old faultlines in the Northeast

After erupting in revolt against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), Assam and other North-eastern States have substantially calmed. People will withdraw to their daily lives soon, but mistaking it for normalcy as the Centre characteristically does in such situations would be dangerous. The Northeast is inhabited by diverse populations, sharing borders with several neighbours. Assertive ethnic politics, including secessionism and resistance to migration into the region, has been a defining character of the area. Grievances of indigenous populations are genuine, but it is difficult, even counterproductive, to try to resolve them by privileging one group over another. Applying a religious test to such an exercise, as the CAA seeks to do, is mindless and dangerous. The Northeast's ethnic divergences have been delicately — and barely — managed with the collaboration of local power-brokers and grant of special property and cultural rights to communities. The BJP's inability in appreciating diversity has long ceased to surprise anyone, but its insistence on aggravating dormant faultlines and inflaming new passions is baffling. The CAA has wrecked the Assam Accord of 1985 and exhumed sleeping hostilities.

Prime Minister Modi's declaration of his government's commitment to cultural and linguistic rights of Northeast communities, once the region went up in flames, was welcome, though late. It takes meaningful gestures, not copious words, to hold together diverse populations in the pursuit of common goals. It is a pity that the BJP, despite its ambitions to make India a superpower, cannot comprehend the elementary truth that triggering numerous mutinies across the nation is an impossible route to that. After the subterfuge on Kashmir, which involved responsible government functionaries lying to the public, the trust deficit of this government among vulnerable communities has multiplied. The BJP has made inroads in the Northeast and is in power in all seven States. In the 2019 Lok Sabha election, it won a majority of the region's 25 seats. The party mistook its victories for an approval of its Hindutva politics, it now appears. Hindutva seeks to subordinate all identities to an overarching Hindu identity, but societies cannot be shoehorned into such narrow politics. The CAA seeks to provide a legal imprimatur to the BJP's blatant politics of turning the Northeast's ethnic faultlines into a religious one, by excluding Muslims alone. By pitting Bengali-speaking Hindus who have moved around in the region against their Muslim counterparts, the party hopes to reinforce itself in West Bengal also. The current tempest will soon pass, but this turmoil will not cease. To undo the misadventure of CAA, the Centre must show courage and hold back, and the leadership must demonstrate statesmanship. That will serve the nation well.

Words	Kind	Meaning
Mutiny	Noun	Rebellion, revolt, protest.
Open up	Phrasal verb	Make available (to create/start developing new opportunities).
Fault line	Noun	A divisive issue; a difference of opinion.
Erupt	Verb	Break out, start suddenly, flare up.
Substantially	Adv.	Considerably, significantly, largely.
Normalcy	Noun	A normal condition; normality, regularity.
Characteristically	Adv.	(of a particular person) typically, usually, habitually.
Inhabit	Verb	Live in, occupy.
Assertive	Adj.	Confident, positive, decisive.
Ethnic	Adj.	Relating to a population subgroup (cultural, national, traditional/folk) with a common national or cultural tradition.
Secessionism	Noun	(of small region/group) a practice/system of separating/leaving from a country/a larger group formally.
Resistance	Noun	Opposition to, refusal to accept, unwillingness/disinclination/reluctance to accept.
Defining	Adj.	Determining, deciding.
Grievance	Noun	Complaint, criticism, objection/protest.
Indigenous	Adj.	Native/local, original, domestic.
Counterproductive	Adj.	Harmful, damaging, dangerous/destructive.
Privilege	Verb	Give a special advantage.
Divergence	Noun	Difference, dissimilarity/variance; deviation.
Collaboration	Noun	Cooperation, alliance, partnership/association.

Power-broker	Noun	An individual or a group of people who has a big influence & makes decisions on political/economic power.
Cease	Verb	Bring to an end/halt/stop, conclude, terminate.
Insistence	Noun	Demand, compulsion, requirement.
Aggravate	Verb	Make worse, exacerbate, inflame, compound.
Dormant	Adj.	Inactive, passive, inoperative.
Inflame	Verb	Aggravate, worsen/heighten, exacerbate.
Baffling	Adj.	Confusing, unclear, puzzling.
Wreck	Verb	Ruin, destroy, damage.
Accord	Noun	Agreement, deal, contract.
Exhume	Verb	Disinter, unearth, dig up, expose.
Sleeping	Adj.	Relating to something in a state of sleep/inactivity.
Linguistic	Adj.	Relating to language; lingual.
Go up in flames	Phrase	Burn, be on fire, be ablaze, be destroyed by fire.
Gesture	Noun	Action, deed, sign.
Copious	Adj.	Full, extensive/considerable, substantial.
Hold together	Phrasal verb	Remain united.
Pursuit	Noun	Aspiration, quest, search.
Comprehend	Verb	Understand, grasp, fathom.
Subterfuge	Noun	Deception, trickery/tactic, intrigue.
Deficit	Noun	Shortfall, deficiency, shortage.
Vulnerable	Adj.	Relating to a weak/neglected person who is in need of special care/support
Make inroads (into)	Phrase	Occupy, capture, seize.
Mistake	Verb	Get wrong, misunderstand, be at fault.
Subordinate	Verb	Treat or regard as of lesser importance.
Overarching	Adj.	All inclusive, complete, all-embracing, comprehensive.
Shoehorn	Verb	Force, put, push/thrust (something into a space).
Narrow	Adj.	Intolerant, illiberal, short-sighted, discriminatory.
Imprimatur	Noun	Authorization, approval, consent/blessing.
Blatant	Adj.	Evident, flagrant/glaring, obvious.
Pit against	Phrasal verb	Set/match against, put in opposition to, put in competition with.
Counterpart	Noun	A person/thing that serves the same job/function but in a different location; equivalent
Reinforce	Verb	Strengthen, fortify, bolster up.
Tempest	Noun	Turmoil, disturbance, disorder/chaos.
Turmoil	Noun	Confusion, disorder, trouble.
Undo	Verb	Reverse, cancel, invalidate/annul.
Misadventure	Noun	Misfortune; problem/difficulty, mishap/setback.
Hold back	Phrasal verb	Prevent, block, thwart/retrain.
Statesmanship	Noun	Statecraft, negotiations/discussions; the skilful management of a country's public affairs.