

UNDERSIRABLE AND DIVISIVE**Promoting greater use of Hindi is fine, but the language of homogenisation is best avoided**

It may be customary for the Union Home Minister, who is also in charge of the Department of Official Language, to make a pitch for greater use of Hindi in official work on the occasion of ‘Hindi Diwas’, observed every year on September 14. However, Home Minister Amit Shah’s remarks this year have raised the hackles of political leaders in some States that do not speak Hindi. The possible reason for the pushback from south Indian leaders to his pitch is that he went beyond the usual general remarks on promoting Hindi, and made sweeping claims that Hindi alone could unite the country, and it was the language which should become India’s “identity” globally. Embedded in his tweets as well as a speech on the occasion was a note of resentment against the continuing influence of English. The Kerala Chief Minister dismissed as absurd the claim that Hindi was a unifying force, and even saw in Mr. Shah’s remarks an attempt to trigger a controversy and to divert attention from real issues. Former Karnataka Chief Ministers Siddaramaiah and H.D. Kumaraswamy and DMK president M.K. Stalin questioned Mr. Shah’s remarks and saw in them an attempt to impose Hindi on their States. Few would disagree that imposing a language on the unwilling is hardly unifying, but could turn out to be divisive. Further, national identity cannot be linked to any one language, as it is, by definition, something that transcends linguistic and regional differences.

It is time the Centre realised that the creation of linguistic States has obviated the need for a campaign against a “foreign language” allegedly fostering a slave mentality. Regional languages have become the official languages of the States, and the continued use of English has a strong utilitarian value. While the development of Hindi is undoubtedly a constitutional command the Union government cannot ignore, the manner in which it is done should not give the impression to the States that there is creeping imposition of Hindi. It was only a few months ago that the Centre defused a controversy when it got a paragraph removed from the draft New Education Policy that indicated the mandatory teaching of Hindi. The fact that the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party is seen as a ‘Hindi-Hindu’ party that encourages unbridled homogenisation also works against it whenever such controversies emerge. It would be disastrous for the country’s famed diversity if the promotion of Hindi is considered a step towards a ‘one nation, one language’ kind of unity. Mr. Shah has spoken simultaneously about the increased use of the mother tongue, but detractors would only see it as an attempt to sugar-coat Hindi imposition and the sidelining of English. According a hegemonic role to the “most-spoken” language in the country may promote cultural homogenisation, but that is hardly desirable in a country with a diverse population, a plural ethos and is a cauldron of many languages and cultures.

Words

Divisive

Kind

Adj.

Meaning

Alienating, estranging, isolating, schismatic

Homogenisation	Noun	Uniform, similar, akin, analogous
Circumvent	Verb	Avoid, parry, shun, abstain
Embedded	Adj.	Surrounding, implanted
Resentment	Adj.	Bitterness, indignation, pique, hostility
Absurd	Adj.	Preposterous, ridiculous, ludicrous, farcial, risible
Unity	Verb	Unite, merge, fuse, amalgamate, coalesce, combine blend, synthesize
Trigger	Verb	Activate, set off, set going, trip
Controversy	Noun	Disagreement, dispute, argument, dissension, contention, altercation, wrangle
Divert	Verb	Reroute, redirect, deflect, channel, detract
Transcend	Verb	Surpass, excel, trump, out do, outshine, outclass, outvie
Obviate	Verb	Preclude, prevent, remove, foreclose, avert
Foster	Verb	Encourage, promote, further, stimulate
Utilitarian	Adj.	Practical, functional, serviceable, useful, effective pragmatic
Command	Noun	Order, diktat, decree, injunction, behest
Creeping	Adj.	Crawling, slithering, sliding, squirming
Defuse	Verb	Deactivate, disarm, disable, alleviate
Unbridle	Adj.	Unrestrained, unconstrained, rampant, uncurbed uncontrolled
Emerge	Verb	Come out, appear, turn up, surface, emanate
Disastrous	Adj.	Perilous, deleterious, pernicious, chancy
Diversity	Noun	Variety, miscellany, assortment, melange
Simultaneously	Adj.	Concurrently, concomitantly
Detractor	Noun	Critic, disparager, censurer
Sideline	Verb	Keep away, avoid, circumvent, parry
Hegemonic	Adj.	Primacy, superiority, lordship
Ethos	Noun	Spirit, character, atmosphere, essence
Cauldron	Noun	A situation characterized by instability and strong emotion

AVOIDABLE BOAT TRAGEDY**As past lessons remain unlearned, man-made tragedies recur with alarming regularity**

There is a familiar ring to boat tragedies in Andhra Pradesh. Unsuspecting tourists, mostly from cities, craving to capture a bewitching river view and meeting with a watery grave. The government of the day announces a hefty ex-gratia, promises deterrent action against all those responsible and initiates steps to prevent such tragedies. But the wheel is not broken, and very soon another tragedy strikes. The latest boat tragedy on the Godavari in which eight tourists drowned and 37 are still missing, is no different. The private operator took on board over 70 tourists who were hoping to see the scenic beauty of Papikondalu, without any permission and ventured into the river that has been in spate for days now. Apparently the inexperienced crew could not cope with a sudden current of water at Kachuluru, one of the most dangerous spots enroute. The boat tilted and capsized within minutes and only those wearing life jackets could save themselves. Among the reports that came from the accident spot, there was one that suggested that some tourists removed their jackets as it was sultry, some wanted to have lunch and some more thought it would come in the way of taking selfies. Only a thorough investigation will bring out all the facts.

Police records show over 100 people perishing in boat mishaps during the last three years, the major one being on the Krishna in November 2017 when 22 tourists lost their lives. And all of these tragedies were avoidable if simple precautions were in place — having only experienced crew with valid licences, provision of life jackets for all and not setting out when the river is in full flow. Were any lessons learnt from these recurring mishaps? The accident on the Krishna jolted the N. Chandrababu Naidu government into action and a committee was formed to formulate preventive steps. The committee highlighted the multiplicity of the departments concerned — ranging from irrigation to director of ports — with permitting rides and monitoring and checking illegal ones. It pointed to lack of coordination. For instance, when the river touches the danger mark, the irrigation department should send out a warning to all concerned not to allow any rides. Without a single regulatory body, the result was this typical bureaucratic phenomenon of passing the buck. The committee suggested making the directorate of ports as a nodal agency and the AP Inland Vessel Rules were brought into effect. Nobody knows what happened to these rules and other decisions. To prevent such man-made tragedies, the government must pin responsibility on officials instead of resorting to mere palliative steps.

<u>Words</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Recur	Verb	Happen again, reoccur, repeat, reappear
Alarming	Adj.	Worrying, disturbing, perturbing
Craving	Adj.	Longing, yearning, hankering
Bewitching	Adj.	Enchanting, beautiful, entrancing

Watery grave	Noun	Death by drowning
Announce	Verb	Pronounce, aver, avow, herald, proclaim
Hefty	Adj.	Violent, sturdy, strapping, bulky
Ex-gratia	Noun	Payment made out of good will
Deterrent	Adj.	Disincentive, discouragement, dissuasion, damper
Drown	Verb	Flood, submerge, immerse, inundate, deluge
Venture	Verb	Move, dive, progress, proceed
Apparent	Adj.	Clear, elicit, coherent, overt, unequivocal, lucid, Pellucid
In spate		Rive overflowing, due to sudden flood
Tilt	Verb	List, lean, camber, incline, cant, bevel
Capsize	Verb	Overturn, upset, upend, topple, over
Sultry	Adj.	Humid, close, airless, stuffy, muggy
Perish	Verb	Die, wither, croak, flat line, de cease
Precaution	Noun	Safeguard, preventive, measure, insurance
Jolt	Noun	Push, thrust, bump, jostle, joggle
Multiplicity	Noun	Abundance, scores, mass, myriad
Pass the buck		Shift the responsibility
Pin		Hold, restrain, press, immobilize
Palliative	Adj.	Soothing, alleviating, sedative, calmative