

Course correction – Broken Houses

The Budget session shamed democracy; the damage can be undone with a new session.

With the two Houses of Parliament **adjourned** sine die on April 6, the institutional crisis of **afflicting** the legislature has been framed by both statistics and the solutions being offered by the Treasury and Opposition benches. While each side is **stacking** the blame at the other's doorstep, neither will emerge **unscathed**; within the heavily **polarised**, disruption-at-any-cost **strategizing** inside parliament there is no sign of wiser **counsel** to reach across the floor and **forge** a via media. The session began on January 29, the Union Budget was presented on February 1, and the first part concluded on February 9. In the second part of the session, starting March 5, the productivity of both Houses was less than 10%. Against a long list of pending Bills, just one was passed by both Houses, the Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill 2017. That was it for the Rajya Sabha. The Lok Sabha passed three other bills related to the Budget: the Finance Bill 2018 and two appropriation Bills. These are money bills that do not need the Rajya Sabha's nod, and with the National Democratic Alliance's numbers in the Lok Sabha, their passage was never going to be in doubt. But it must be an occasion of shame that the Budget was passed in the Lower House without any debate **whatsoever**. Other numbers deepen the reading of the crisis: both Houses lost more than 120 hours each to disruptions; and the Rajya Sabha took up just five out of 419 listed starred questions (that is, questions that Ministers answer orally, with MPs allowed to ask supplementary questions).

However, the crisis is defined by more than numbers; it is the quality of interaction that is damaging India's democracy. The Lok Sabha Speaker, most **glaringly**, failed to use the powers at her command to suspend unruly MPS so that a notice for a no-confidence motion could be considered. Certainly, for all the **expedient** calculations that guided Opposition parties and the government at different points to have the Houses disrupted, eventually neither benefits. Both come across looking **effete** – the Opposition for failing to keep the government answerable (especially by failing to use Question Hour), and the government for not **mustering** the grace and conviction to debate a no trust motion. Some ruling party MPs proposed that their salaries be **docked**, as if the crisis is nothing but budgetary. A special session before the monsoon session to finish pending business has been **mooted**. Although this is bound to raise the question why Parliament was held to **ransom** if the Opposition had indeed wanted it to function, it is an idea worth considering seriously by all parties. For one, it provides an opportunity to fix a broken parliamentary calendar and finish unfinished legislative business. For another, even the process of reaching an understanding to hold another session may help in repairing, at least to a degree, the very image of our parliamentarians – who seemed to be **unabashed** about creating and sustaining an institutional crisis.

WORD LIST

1. **Adjourn** : (stop a proceeding)
 Synonym : defey, delay, discontinue, postpone, put off, recess, suspend, restrain, stay.
2. **Afflict** : (cause or become hurt)
 Synonym : annoy, beset, bother, burden, oppress, plague, rack, torment, torture, wound.
3. **Stack** : (pile, pile up)
 Synonym : bundle, heap, mountain, pyramid, sheaf
4. **Unscathed** : (not hurt)
 Synonym : uninjured, unmarked, untouched, safe, unscarred
5. **Polarised** : (antithetical)
 Synonym : contradictory, contrary, contrasted, counter, inverse, opposed, opposite
6. **Strategies** : (about)
 Synonym : arrange, blueprint, budget, calculate, chart, choreograph, design, frame, lay out, organise, plan, prepared, project, shape
7. **Counsel** : (guidance, legal representative, give advice)
 Synonym : admonition, advice, advisement, caution, consideration, consultation, deliberation, direction, information, instruction, forethought, suggestion, tip.
8. **Forge** : (counterfeit, make something from scratch)
 Synonym : falsify, produce, coin, copy, design, duplicate, fabricate, fake, fashion, imitate, invent, make, reproduce
9. **Whatsoever** : (whatever)
 Synonym : anything, any, everything
10. **Glaringly** : (greatly, brightly)
 Synonym : considerably, enormously, extremely, highly, hugely, immensely, incredibly, indeed, largely, markedly, notably, remarkably, vastly, tremendously, abundantly
11. **Expedient** : (worthwhile, appropriate, resource)
 Synonym : adhoc, desirable, advantageous, feasible, judicious, pragmatic, prudent, fit
12. **Effete** : (spoiled, exhausted, unproductive)
 Synonym : burnt out, corrupt, debased, decadent, decayed, declining, degenerate, drained, feeble
13. **Muster** : (gathering, come together)
 Synonym : aggregation, assembly, collection, company, convocation, crowd, meeting, mobilization.
14. **Dock** : (land on the water front)
 Synonym : anchor, berth, hook-up, moor, rendezvous, tie up, link up, put in
15. **Mooted** : (as in bring up, broach, debate, discuss) (initiate, mention in conversation)
 Synonym : allude to, broach, discuss, introduce, propose, raise, refer, submit, touchon, advance, advert, moot, move, offer, point out.
16. **Ransom** : (blackmail money paid for return of possession or person)
 Synonym : bribe, compensation, deliverance, expiation, payment, payoff, price, redemption, release, rescue

Course correction – Crime in Kathua

Attempts to undermine the investigation into a little girls rape and murder must be resisted

The 15-page charge filed by the Jammu and Kashmir Police's Crime Branch on the **abduction**, rape and murder of an eight year old girl in Kathua district is chilling. An unspeakably **horrific** crime has been **overlain** with an ugly form of **communal** politics, which has heightened the feeling of **vulnerability** among the Bakherwal nomadic community. Asifa Bano had been missing in Rasana village since January 10. On January 17, her **mutilated** body was found, bearing the marks of gang rape. This week, local lawyers tried to prevent the police from filing the chargesheet, and the Jam mu High Court Bar Association called for a bandh on Wednesday demanding that the investigation be handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation. By all accounts the demand **owes** less to any faith in CBI impartiality, and more to the ongoing attempt to influence the police's investigation that has led to the arrest of eight men, including some policemen charged with destroying evidence. The chargesheet lists as the main conspirator the caretaker of the temple in Rasana where Asifa was allegedly held, and threads together the sequence of events. The **insinuation** that a local police force that reflects the multi-religious composition of the State cannot be **entrusted** with a case in which the victim is a Muslim and the alleged accused are Hindus must be strongly resisted.

It is a shame that the State government, a **coalition** of the J&K Peoples Democratic Party and the BJP, has been so **feeble** in criticising the **sectarian** undercurrents. Protests in Kathua have been going on for months, **amidst** allegations that innocent people are being framed and demands that one of the arrested police officers be released. An organisation called the Hindu Ekta Manch too populated the protests and two BJP ministers from the State government were present at a rally in support of the accused. The Gujjar Bakherwal community's sense of **isolation**, as the dead eight year old is sought to be defined by her **ethnic** and religious identify, is especially heightened given the **backdrop** of drives to **evict** them from what they say are their traditional camping sites in forests. One line of inquiry is that the motive for her abduction and **assault** was to **instil** fear among the **nomads** in pressing for their rights to the forests and commons. But while it is understandable that the nomads are feeling the brunt of the **intimidation** and it is vital to address their larger anxieties, to superimpose the crime on the **tussle** over forest rights would be to diminish the brutality brought upon the little girl. The investigation must be pursued for the hate crime it is. It does not just tie in with her community's rights along with the Unnao rape case in U.P., in which the victim's father died in police custody this week, it shows how loaded the system is against those seeking justice.

WORD LIST

1. **Abduction** : (taking away by force)
Synonym : Kidnapping, rape, seizure, theft, appropriation.
2. **Horrific** : (horrible)
Synonym : abominable, appalling, awful, cruel, disgusting, dreadful, eerie, frightful, ghastly, grim, hair, raising, horrid.
3. **Overlain** : (as in dominate, lap, overlap), (tower above)
Synonym : Bestride, overlie, overlook, overtop, survey, look down upon.
4. **Communal** : (collective; shared)
Synonym : common, communistic, community, conjunct, cooperative, general, joint.
5. **Vulnerability** : (exposure)
Synonym : susceptibility, accountability, blame, burden, compulsion, debt, duty, liability, onus
6. **Mutilated** : (dismembered)
Synonym : disfigured, mangled, amputated, maimed, marred
7. **Owe** : (have an obligation)
Synonym : incur, lost, be found, be contracted, be in debt, be indebted, obligation, behind, feel bound.
8. **Insinuation** : (implication)
Synonym : innuendo, hint, suggestion.
9. **Entrust** : (give custody, authority to)
Synonym : allocate, assign, authorize, commend, commit, confer, confide, impose, invest, relegate, trust, turn over, recon, rely
10. **Coalition** : (allied group, association)
Synonym : affiliation, alliance, amalgam, combination, combine, compact, confederation, conjunction, federation, integration, party, unification.
11. **Feeble** : (not strong; ineffective)
Synonym : ailing, decrepit, flabby, fragile, frail, incompetent, inefficient, infirm, lame, tame, weak, paltry, weakened.
12. **Sectarian** : (narrow-minded, exclusive)
Synonym : factional, parochial, partisan, dissident, fanatic, limited, local, provincial
13. **Amidst** : (in middle of; among)
Synonym : amongst, between, during, mid, over, surrounded by, throughout
14. **Isolation** : (seclusion)
Synonym : confinement, desolation, segregation, solitude, aloneness, aloofness, detachment, exile, hiding, privacy.
15. **Ethnic** : (racial, cultural)
Synonym : indigenous, national, traditional, tribal, native
16. **Backdrop** : (setting for something)
Synonym : scenery, scrim, surroundings, décor, landscape, setting, spectacle, terrain.
17. **Evict** : (throw out from residence)
Synonym : chase, dislodge, dismiss, dispossess, eject, expel, force out, oust, remove.
18. **Assault** : (attack)
Synonym : aggression, charge, incursion, invasion, offensive, rape, strike, violation.

19. **Instil** : (gradually but firmly establish) (an idea or attitude) in a person's mind
 Synonym : inculcate, implant, fix, ingrain, infuse, impress, imprint, introduce.
20. **Nomad** : (person who wanders from place to place)
 Synonym : migrant, pilgrim, vagabond, wanderer, rambler, roamer
21. **Intimidation** : (bullying)
 Synonym : coercion, frightening, cowing, daunting, demoralizing, terrorizing, threatening
22. **Tussle** : (struggle)
 Synonym : Brawl, fray, scuffle, battle, brush, clash, combat, conflict, contest, encounter, fight, hassle

IDIOM AND THEIR MEANINGS AND EXAMPLES

1. **Last straw**
Example – If I complete this last straw, I will complete this level.
Meaning – The final problem in a series of problems.
2. **Break the ice**
Example – Always break the ice in a group discussion.
Meaning – To initiate a social conversation or interaction.
3. **A bird's eye view**
Example – The building gives you a bird's eye view of the whole city.
Meaning – A view from a very high place that allows seeing a very large area.
4. **Be on cloud nine**
Example – I will be on cloud nine when I pass the exam.
Meaning – Be very happy.
5. **Eat humble pie**
Example – The employee will have to eat humble pie for his misbehavior to his boss.
Meaning – To apologize humbly.
6. **To show the white feather**
Example – Becky showed the white feather and backed down.
Meaning – To act like a coward
7. **To play fast and loose**
Example – The TN reporter is known for playing fast and loose with the facts.
Meaning – To act in an unreliable way./Act carelessly or irresponsibly

8. Wear one's heart on one's sleeve

Example – Sumit always wears his heart on his sleeve, so there is no doubt who he'll be supporting.

Meaning – To make your feelings and opinions obvious to other people.

9. To make a long face

Example – Why have you got such a long face? Better luck next time.

Meaning – To look depressed.

10. In apple pie order

Example – Please put everything in apple pie order before you leave.

Meaning – Perfectly methodical arrangement./Very well organized.

11. To strain every nerve

Example – I was straining every nerve to break the code but failed every time.

Meaning – To try extremely hard to do something.

12. To have an axe to grind

Example – The best reporting is done by people who don't have an axe to grind.

Meaning – To have a selfish interest to serve.

13. To draw the line

Example – It's hard to keep young people under control, but you have to draw the line somewhere.

Meaning – To set limits. To separate one thing from another.

14. Beat around the bush

Example – Don't beat around the bush, just tell me what's happening here.

Meaning – To avoid talking about an embarrassing subject as you are worried about upsetting the person you are talking to.

15. A wild goose chase

Example – After five hours spent wandering in the city, we realized that we were on a wild goose chase.

Meaning – An absurdly hopeless enterprise. Wasting time looking for something that you are not going to find.

16. A litmus test

Example – His performance in the Test matches served as a litmus test whether he would join the One-day team.

Meaning – An experiment that seeks to determine the state of one important factor. A method that helps to know if something is correct.

17. To cry wolf

Example – Don't pay attention to her. She is just crying wolf again.

Meaning – To cry or complain about something when nothing is really wrong.

18. To be hard up

Example – James was hard up for cash to pay his bills.

Meaning – To be short of money.

19. To take to one's heels

Example – The man took to his heels to try to get the bus before it leaves the bus stop.

Meaning – To run very fast.

20. Cry over spilt milk

Example – There is no use of crying over spilt milk, instead of being careful in the future.

Meaning – Complaining about a loss or failure from the past.

21. At the drop of a hat

Example – She is always ready to go for an outing at the drop of a hat.

Meaning – Willingness to do something instantly.

22. Afraid of one's own shadow

Example – My grandfather always had panic attacks. He was the kind of a person who was afraid of his own shadow.

Meaning – To become easily frightened.

23. A house of cards

Example – That well-reputed company turned out to be a house of cards within a year.

Meaning – A poor plan or organization that is very weak and can be easily destroyed.

24. Black and Blue

Example – The thief was beaten black and blue by the public.

Meaning – Full of bruises (Black marks caused by being hit).

25. To be in the doldrums

Example – My friend is in doldrums since a week and nothing I do seems to cheer him up.

Meaning – To feel sad and lack of energy to do something.

26. Be on cloud nine

Example – I will be on cloud nine when I pass UPSC exam this year.

Meaning – Be very happy

27. Fool's paradise

Example – They were living in a fool's paradise, refusing to accept that they were facing poverty.

Meaning – False sense of happiness or success.

28. Give cold shoulder

Example – The principal has given the cold shoulder to the proposal to arrange an inter-school dance competition.

Meaning – To ignore

29. Get a raw deal

Example – It is very sad that the backward class poor children get a raw deal in education.

Meaning – not to be treated as well as others.

30. It takes two to tango

Example – The manager realizes that it takes two to tango before taking the decision.

Meaning – Actions or communications need more than one person.

***Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement.
Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.***

Helen Keller