

Course correction – Untenable: on M.J. Akbar

M.J. Akbar should have resigned. Or else, asked to go

The Minister of State for External Affairs, M.J. Akbar, should have done the only right thing in the circumstances — resign. This was the only course to limit the already significant damage to the high office he holds. His legacy in Indian journalism would also have been better served had he quit first and attempted to defend himself legally or otherwise later. Unfortunately, he chose not to. Upon his return to Delhi from an overseas official trip on Sunday, he went on the offensive by dismissing the long string of charges of sexual harassment made against him by former women colleagues as a tissue of lies. He chose to spin an unconvincing web of conspiracy around the sudden spate of the #Me Too disclosures over the last week. Mr. Akbar's basic theme: with elections round the corner, these charges are motivated. There is a second, more specific line in his attempted defence — one that suggests that the gravamen of the charges is vague and unsubstantiated. While it is true that not every one of the dozen or so women have claimed they were physically assaulted, the overall picture they have painted is that of a systematic pattern of sexual harassment. Their stories range from suggestiveness and innuendo to outright molestation. Together they make for sad and worrying reading, but at least a couple highlight how far he seemed willing to go. Ghazala Wahab, now executive editor at FORCE magazine, has written of repeated molestation at his hands in the mid-1990s when he was her editor at Asian Age. Majlie de Puy Kamp, now a New York-based reporter, has spoken of how a decade later he forcibly kissed her, when she was 18 and interning with him.

Mr. Akbar's conspiracy theory that the MeToo charges have settled upon him because elections are now looming is weak and totally unconvincing. He has no political heft and a conspiracy to tarnish him and secure his speedy exit from the Narendra Modi government would have left it none the weaker. Now that he has decided to dig his heels in, the focus cannot but shift to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Why wasn't his resignation demanded and secured on his return to the Capital? Surely, the Prime Minister had more than enough time to sift through the charges, take stock of Mr. Akbar's alleged misdemeanours and conclude whether he should continue in the Cabinet. By failing to immediately force him to step down, Mr. Modi has sent an unfortunate message about his government's attitude to harassment and the protection of women in workplaces. He has appeared as if he is standing behind Mr. Akbar and will be perceived by many as having failed India's women.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- Untenable - impossible to continue because of serious problems, opposition, or criticism
- Circumstance - a fact or condition that affects a situation
- Resign - to state formally that you are leaving a job permanently
- Significant - very large or noticeable
- Legacy - something that someone has achieved that continues to exist after they stop working or die
- Defend - to protect someone or something from attack
- Overseas - happening or existing in a country across the sea from your country
- Offensive - used for attacking

- Dismissing - to refuse to accept that something might be true or important
- Sexual harassment - the offensive or threatening behaviour of a person who regularly makes sexual comments or touches someone in a sexual way
- Former - used for describing someone or something that had a particular job, title, status etc in the past, but not now
- Colleague - someone who works in the same organization or department as you
- A tissue of lies - a story that is just a series of lies
- Unconvincing - if an explanation or story is unconvincing, it does not sound or seem true or real
- Conspiracy - a secret plan by a group of people to do something bad or illegal, especially in politics
- Spate of - a large number of things of the same type, usually bad things, that suddenly happen in a very short period of time
- Disclosure - the process of giving information to people, especially information that was secret
- Round the corner - coming very soon
- Motivated - caused by a particular belief or emotion
- Gravamen - the essence or most serious part of a complaint or accusation
- Vague - not clearly or fully explained
- Unsubstantiated - an unsubstantiated argument, claim etc is one for which you have no evidence
- Assault - to attack someone violently
- Innuendo - the use of statements with a second possible meaning, usually referring to sex and intended as a joke, or one of these statements
- Outright - without hiding your feelings
- Molestation - the act of molesting someone (= touching or attacking them in a sexual way)
- Loom - if something unpleasant or difficult looms, it seems likely to happen soon
- Heft - power or strength
- Tarnish - if something tarnishes your reputation or image, it makes people have a worse opinion of you than they did before
- Misdemeanour - an action that is bad or wrong, but not in a serious way
- Perceive - to understand or think about something in a particular way

Course correction – Resisting resistance: on antibiotic misuse

India needs to strengthen and implement regulations on antibiotic misuse

Even as antibiotics lose their efficacy against deadly infectious diseases worldwide, it seems to be business as usual for governments, private corporations and individuals who have the power to stall a post-antibiotic apocalypse. In a recent investigation, it was found that the world's largest veterinary drug-maker, Zoetis, was selling antibiotics as growth promoters to poultry farmers in India, even though it had stopped the practice in the U.S. India is yet to regulate antibiotic-use in poultry, while the U.S. banned the use of antibiotics as growth-promoters in early 2017. So, technically, the drug-maker was doing nothing illegal and complying with local regulations in both countries. But such reasoning is self-defeating, because antibiotic-resistance does not respect political boundaries. Of course, the country that stands to lose the most from antibiotic resistance is India, given that its burden of infectious disease is among the world's highest. According to a 2016 PLOS Medicine paper, 416 of every 100,000 Indians die of infectious diseases each year. This is more

than twice the U.S.'s crude infectious-disease mortality-rate in the 1940s, when antibiotics were first used there. If these miracle drugs stop working, no one will be hit harder than India.

This is why the country's progress towards a tighter regulatory regime must pick up pace. Consider the three major sources of resistance: overuse of antibiotics by human beings; overuse in the veterinary sector; and environmental antibiotic contamination due to pharmaceutical and hospital discharge. To tackle the first source, India classified important antibiotics under Schedule H1 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules 1945, so that they couldn't be sold without prescriptions. Still, Schedule H1 drugs are freely available in pharmacies, with state drug-controllers unable to enforce the law widely. As far as veterinary use goes, India's 2017 National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance did talk about restricting antibiotic use as growth promoters. Sadly, no progress has been made on this front yet, allowing companies to sell last-resort drugs to farmers over the counter. The 2017 document also spoke about regulating antibiotics levels in discharge from pharmaceutical firms. For instance, Hyderabad's pharmaceutical industry has been pumping massive amounts of antibiotics into local lakes, rivers and sewers. This has led to an explosion in resistance genes in these waterbodies. Still, India is yet to introduce standards for antibiotics in waste water, which means antibiotic discharge in sewage is not even being monitored regularly. As the country takes its time to formulate regulations, the toll from antibiotic-misuse is growing at an alarming rate. According to a 2013 estimate, around 58,000 newborns die in India each year due to sepsis from resistant bacteria. When these numbers mount, India will have no one to blame but itself.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- Resist - to oppose or fight against someone or something
- Antibiotic - a drug that cures illnesses and infections caused by bacteria
- Efficacy - effectiveness in producing the result that you intended
- Infectious disease - an infectious disease is one that can spread from one person to another
- Apocalypse - a situation in which many people die and many things are destroyed
- Investigation - the process of trying to find out all the details or facts about something in order to discover who or what caused it or how it happened
- Veterinary - relating to the care of animals that are ill or injured
- Poultry - birds such as chickens that are used for meat or eggs
- Regulate - to control an activity, process, or industry officially by using rules
- Comply - to obey a rule or law, or to do what someone asks you to do
- Self-defeating - causing the same problems that you were intending to solve
- Crude - not exact or accurate, but often good enough for a particular purpose
- Mortality - the number of deaths within a particular area, group etc
- Regime - a system of rules that control something
- Veterinary - relating to the care of animals that are ill or injured
- Contamination - the process of making something dirty, polluted, or poisonous by adding a chemical, waste, or infection
- Pharmaceutical - relating to the production or sale of medicines and drugs used for treating medical conditions
- Cosmetics - substances that you use on your skin to make yourself look more attractive
- Prescription - a piece of paper that a doctor gives you that says what type of medicine you need
- Pharmacy - a shop where medicines are prepared and sold

- Enforce - to make sure that a law or rule is obeyed by people
- Antimicrobial - a drug that is used to combat microorganisms such as bacteria or fungi
- Last-resort - used for saying that you will do something only after trying everything else to solve a problem
- For instance - for example
- Massive - very large in amount or degree
- Sewer - an underground pipe or passage that carries sewage
- Explosion - a very large increase in the size, amount, or importance of something over a very short period of time
- Waterbody - a body of water forming a physiographical feature, for example a sea or a reservoir
- Sewage - waste substances, especially waste from people's bodies, removed from houses and other buildings by a system of large underground pipes
- Monitor - to regularly check something or watch someone in order to find out what is happening
- Formulate - to develop a plan, system, or proposal carefully, thinking about all of its details
- Antibiotic - a drug that cures illnesses and infections caused by bacteria
- Alarming - frightening or worrying
- Estimate - a guess of what the size, value, amount, cost, etc. of something might be

SOME IMPORTANT IDIOMS AND PHRASES

1. The icing on the cake

Example – I got MS in the University that I wished to and scholarship was like the icing on the cake.

Meaning – Something that turns good into great.

2. Jump the bandwagon

Example – When I put on few kgs, I immediately jumped on the bandwagon and join the gym.

Meaning – To join a popular activity or trend.

3. Cost an arm and a leg

Example – My laziness costs me an arm and a leg every time.

Meaning – Be very expensive.

4. The ball is in your court

Example – Now the ball is in my court and I will take the revenge on him.

Meaning – When it is up to you to take the next step or decision.

5. 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.

6. Last straw

Example – If I complete this last straw, I will complete this level.

Meaning – The final problem in a series of problems.

7. Break the ice

Example – Always break the ice in a group discussion.

Meaning – To initiate a social conversation or interaction.

8. 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.

9. Be on cloud nine

Example – I will be on cloud nine when I pass the exam.

Meaning – Be very happy.

10. Eat humble pie

Example – The employee will have to eat humble pie for his misbehavior to his boss.

Meaning – To apologize humbly.

11. To show the white feather

Example – Becky showed the white feather and backed down.

Meaning – To act like a coward

12. 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

13. 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.

14. To make a long face

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

Meaning – To look depressed.

15. In apple pie order

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

Meaning – Perfectly methodical arrangement./Very well organized.

16. 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.

17. 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.

18. 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.

19. 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.

20. 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.

21. 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.

22. 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.

23. To be hard up

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

Meaning – To be short of money.

24. 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.

25. 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.

26. 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.

27. 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.

28. 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.

29. Black and Blue

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

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

30. 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.

31. Be on cloud nine

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

Meaning – Be very happy

32. 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.

33. Give cold shoulder

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

Meaning – To ignore

34. 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.

35. Hit the nail on the head

Example – He always hit the nail on the head in troubled situations.

Meaning – to do the correct thing

36. Hand to mouth

Example – Heavy rainfall led the farmers to live hand to mouth.

Meaning – Live on only basic necessities.

37. Hit the bull's eye

Example – Your suggestion hits the bull's eye in the exam.

Meaning – To be exactly right about something or to achieve the best result possible.

[**Hit the bull's eye** also mean to hit the very center of a circular target. *For example;* The Bowman hits the bull's eye three times in a row.]

38. Let the cat out of the bag

Example – John had planned a surprise party for his wife. But their five-year-old son let the cat out of the bag and ruined the party.

Meaning – To reveal the secret carelessly or by mistake.

39. Make a face

Example – Do you have any better suggestion? If not, then don't make a face.

Meaning – To show dislike or disappointment through facial expression.

70. Don't put all your eggs in one basket

Example – Try to invest in different ways. Don't put all your eggs in one basket.

Meaning – Do not put all your resources in one place.

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TO CHANGE the World ☞