



All animals are equal

So why does the Centre's PCA notification make cattle more equal than others?

The Centre's move to notify new rules to regulate livestock markets under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 (PCA) is either extremely poorly thought out or much too clever for its own good. In a way, both. On the surface, the notification, which spans eight pages, reads like a general document on the regulation of the sale of all kinds of livestock bought and sold in animal markets, with some welcome prohibitions on the cruelty inflicted in the transport and treatment of animals. But parse the rules, and it is evident that cattle – a category that includes cows, buffaloes, bulls and camels – come under a slew of special restrictions which, when effected, could have an extremely serious impact on the meat and livestock industry, not to mention the livelihoods and dietary choices of millions of people. Surprisingly, only the purchase or sale of cattle for slaughter in animal markets has been prohibited. This raises suspicions that the Centre has attempted to conceal, or at least soften perceptions about, an extremely controversial provision, in the guise of passing a seemingly inoffensive, even enlightened, body of rules relating to animal cruelty. The rules framed for the sale of cattle are so cumbersome – for instance, buyers must verify they are agriculturists, and sellers must furnish photo identity proof and written declarations stating that the cattle are not brought to the animal market for slaughter – that one wonders whether the objective is to surreptitiously throttle the entire cattle trade in an elaborate ream of red tape. Is the ban on the sale of cattle for slaughter in animal markets intended to act indirectly as an absolute ban? Is the notification, stripped of its generalities and niceties, really about the BJP government's pet concern, cows?

Such questions are bound to be raised given the way the rules were notified. If the main subject of the notification was the regulation of livestock markets, why was it issued by the Ministry of Environment and not the Animal Husbandry Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, which deals directly with this issue? Moreover, on what ground can the slaughter of any animal for food be prevented under the PCA, when it explicitly recognises that animals may constitute "food for mankind"? What the Act prohibits is only the "infliction of unnecessary pain and suffering" when animals are consumed as food. Such legal infirmities are bound to be challenged in court, but meanwhile the economic costs of this decision will merit a close watch. If estimates that 90% of slaughtered buffaloes are bought and sold in animal markets are correct, then the trade will be crippled. The Centre must address the concerns of the trade as well as of those who suspect the notification is a part of a Machiavellian plot to influence and curb food choices. While there is a case to retain most of the rules prohibiting the cruel treatment of animals, the ban on the sale of cattle for slaughter in animal markets must go.

Temer in trouble

Brazil's President faces new charges, hurting the credibility of politicians even more

Ever since the unpopular Michel Temer took over as President of Brazil after the controversial impeachment of Dilma Rousseff, clearly it was only a matter of time before another corruption scandal surfaced in the country. Mr. Temer formally succeeded Ms. Rousseff in August 2016 by virtue of being the vice-president and leading the centre-right Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB), a crucial part of the ruling coalition when it came to power in 2014. While the impeachment motion brought Ms. Rousseff down, many leaders in the PMDB were already embroiled in cases of corruption, including the then House Speaker, Eduardo Cunha, who led the motion. Mr. Cunha was indicted in the "Operation Car Wash" scandal in May 2016 involving the state-owned oil company Petrobras, and later suspended as Speaker by the Supreme Court over allegations ranging from intimidation of members of the legislature and obstruction of investigations against himself. Five months later, he was arrested for hiding money received from bribes in offshore accounts. When audio tapes surfaced this month showing Mr. Temer, who was already under investigation for corruption, discussing the payment of bribes with Mr. Cunha, it was hardly a shock. It led to street protests seeking Mr. Temer's resignation. Predictably, he has refused to resign and instead used force to quell the agitation.

The Brazilian political class, including the ruling PMDB and the Workers Party (PT) that was in power from 2003 to 2016, has been severely discredited over the past few years. Ms. Rousseff's ouster is clearly a case of the ruling elite finding a scapegoat to escape further investigation into mass graft. The PT had successfully engendered a social democratic regime that combined free market policies during the commodities boom with welfare measures that helped raise many Brazilians out of poverty. Schemes such as Bolsa Familia, former President Lula da Silva's signature welfare plan, had helped Ms. Rousseff win successive elections. But following the global economic downturn and drop in commodity prices the model unravelled, resulting in a contraction in the economy. The lid over what was a wide-ranging corruption racket involving Petrobras and ruling politicians was also blown, implicating even Mr. Lula. With the discredited Mr. Temer now in power, the PT in crisis and the lack of a clean opposition alternative, public confidence in the government and institutions is at a new low. The hope is that the judiciary and police officials who have taken on the onerous task of prosecuting cases against powerful ruling officials will not give up. If they do, the credibility of Brazil's institutions will suffer further, and a cynical electorate could well opt for a populist outside the political system, an increasingly visible trend seen in the Americas.

Misreading the tea leaves

The post-War global order based on institutions may be in crisis, but an alternative is not on the horizon as yet



HARDEEP S. PURI

Institutions created by human beings necessarily reflect the pre-eminent preoccupation of their time. The present, the post-Second World War global order, anchored in the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and now the World Trade Organisation, has survived for over seven decades. This is partly because these institutions responded to the imperative of history when they were created to prevent succeeding generations from being subjected to the scourge of war and the need for post-war economic reconstruction.

Two events

Is this present global order still 'fit for purpose'? Much can be said for both sides of the argument. One thing is, however, clear. An alternative order or vision is not on the horizon. It is useful to bear this in mind whilst evaluating two developments. The first is the underwhelming first hundred days of the Donald Trump presidency which finds itself in an internal civil war situation with both the 'deep state' and the 'fourth estate' and provides cause for anxiety to some that it may be unravelling. The second is Beijing's spectacular Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) extravaganza.

Some initiatives result in the building of institutions that are viable and establish their relevance over a period of time. Others, such as the ill-fated League of Nations, start badly and then fail altogether. Those based on flawed thinking find it even more difficult to take



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off. The present global, post-1945, order can broadly be characterised as having evolved in two phases, the pre-1989 and post-1989 phases. The disintegration of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War and the advent and what seemed like the triumph of globalisation resulted in some intellectuals like Francis Fukuyama to go somewhat prematurely into a celebratory dance.

Brexit and Mr. Trump's victory appeared to some observers to change all that. As I observed elsewhere, it was far too early in 1989 and still too early in 2017 to celebrate the premature demise of globalisation, free trade, human rights, the Washington consensus and interventionist mindsets. All that Brexit and the Trump presidency signify is that Western industrial democracies have still not come to terms with slow rates of economic growth.

Still the only superpower

Does this provide an opening for an alternative order to come into being? Some rebalancing will most certainly take place. But no fundamental alteration and restructuring of the existing global order appears, at this point of time, to be realistically on the horizon. Any suggestions that the Chinese are

taking over or that the two world's largest economies have now resolved all their differences cannot but be somewhat fanciful.

The U.S. is not only an \$18 trillion economy but also has by far the largest industrial military complex and a lead in technology and innovation that it will take several decades for China, the second largest economy, to catch up. The U.S. provides global leadership in terms of global public goods. Even allowing for some set-back through mismanagement, it is inconceivable that these global public goods could be provided by even a transforming China.

This brings us to the BRI extravaganza. When the initiative was first announced in 2013, it was clear that the motivation was to find external outlets for the surplus infrastructure building and manufacturing capacity that had been domestically created and for which demand was now petering out. This brings us to the essential kernel of the problem. Large white elephant type mega projects, such as the one in Hambantota in Sri Lanka, can never be attractive for private investors who will look for returns on their investment. This is where China's state banks come in. With 68% of Sri Lanka's GDP now

FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

Perception and the reality

Readers' reactions show that coverage of three years of the Modi government has been a complex exercise



A.S. PANNERSEELVAN

There are some irrefutable facts that emerged from an exercise to seek readers' opinion on how the Indian media in general, and *The Hindu* in particular, performed its task in covering the first three years of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rule, compared to the American media's role in covering U.S. President Donald Trump's. These facts are, at one level, in conflict with the first principles of journalism. The tone and tenor of vocal readers, with contending and conflicting claims, bring out the complex nature of this exercise.

Five facts

The five facts that I deduced from readers' communications are, in reality, the challenges before every

journalist. First, Mr. Modi is a central figure who defines not only the political discourse of this country but also the contours of public discourse – people either adore his approach to governance or they are worried about the hyper-centralisation that is taking place. Second, for his supporters, the idea of giving him a chance seems to be without a deadline. Or if there is a deadline, it is very fluid; for those who do not see any virtue in this government, the media has given him the longest honeymoon period compared to any of the other post-Emergency politicians. Third, a section of the public is not concerned about the fact that Mr. Modi has not called for any press conference, while others feel that he has denied the media the chance to pose counter-questions and seek clarifications. Fourth, he speaks directly to the people, which is seen by one section as a brilliant move to remove the intermediaries and by the other section as a form of monologue that is not subject to scrutiny. Fifth, both sections recognise the power of in-



formation that is created outside the legacy media but arrive at directly opposite conclusions. For Mr. Modi's supporters, his direct approach, amplified by the social media, is a god-sent alternative to the mainstream media. For those who are sceptical of the government, this is a dangerous mix of half-truths, myths and lies and pieces of information that is not subject to the basic requirement of what is news – namely, verification, fact-checking, attribution and gate-keeping – and hence its resonance with a growing number of people is a cause for concern.

Whenever the shortcomings of

the government pointed out by reporters, based on investigation and verifiable evidence, there is a counter-question that defies logic: what about the failures of earlier Prime Ministers? The values that govern the public sphere are seen as an impediment to the majoritarian march. The language of dissent, difference and dialogue is not seen as a democratic function but as a dirge of a bygone era.

Readers react

Former Air Vice-Marshal K.R. Karnik questions an editorial in this paper, "Preserve the idea of India", which appeared immediately after Mr. Modi's electoral victory. He was convinced that if the newspaper looked at the achievements of the last three years and juxtaposed them with the editorial, the idea of India was not only intact but had even been cemented stronger by the day. Neither did Mr. Karnik spell out the successes of this government nor was he able to point out how the editorial was wrong in its assumptions.

A reader from Bengaluru,

Ravindra Ramarao, felt that newspapers should refrain from having a political ideology in a democracy. He wrote: "Policies of the government must of course be challenged and queried as and when the need arises, but can the ideology of the government be questioned? Who is to decide if the ideology of party A is better than that of party B, C or D? Surely the electoral choice of the people in a democracy should hold supreme and be the arbiter of what should be the country's ideology – till the next elections."

There seems to be a gap between what this newspaper reports and the public's perception of these reports. A letter from Vijay S. Raghavan, from Mumbai, was in a sense a reflection of this conflicting actuality. He wrote: "There was also feeling that *The Hindu* ought to have been more neutral and 'unbiased' in coverage of Modi-related news. However, at present, I don't remember any such items to pinpoint."

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Another encounter

Six militants were reportedly killed near the Line of Control on Saturday, a day which also saw the encounter of Sabzar Ahmad Bhat, Hizbul Mujahideen commander and successor of Burhan Wani ("Six infiltrators killed in Baramulla ambush," "Protests erupt as Wani's successor killed in Pulwama," May 28). While the former news is welcome, the latter causes anguish. Jammu and Kashmir is a part of India and hence the Kashmiris who demand 'azaadi' also need to be considered Indians and brought into the mainstream. The killing of Wani last year and the consequent violence has not brought any solution to the Valley's political problems. Curbs by the state on freedom of speech, including by repeatedly blocking social media platforms, do not speak well of the situation either. The continuing stone-pelting, the multiple incidents of violence and the failure of the administration to maintain law and order inevitably point out to the need for a change in

strategy. Recent attempts at peace, such as the appointment of interlocutors by the Centre in 2010, proved to be an anti-climax. However, the push for peace needs to continue by involving all parties, under the leadership of the Centre, with a time frame. The armed forces, meanwhile, should concentrate more on border security, leaving the State's law and order maintenance to the police.

S.V. VENKATAKRISHNAN,
Bengaluru

■ As the Valley witnesses violent protests after Bhat's killing in an encounter, normal life continues to be crippled, with separatists gaining the upper hand by calling for shutdowns. The separatists' tactics, with elements in Pakistan as well as some locals providing help, are only resulting in more deaths – of civilians, militants as well as security forces. School and college students continue to be the big losers. Before the situation slips further out of hand, the Centre needs to intervene with an open mind, taking assistance from eminent personalities,

to devise a solution to the deep-rooted political issue.

K.R. SRINIVASAN,
Secunderabad

■ The killing of Bhat only underscores that militancy in Kashmir is being very closely monitored by the Centre. Undeterred by the prospects of a backlash, the government's moves to eliminate militants need to be lauded. It will be a big setback to those involved in fomenting terrorism in the Valley. A strong message has been sent to the young radicals that the administration will not take things lying down. When there is a democratically elected government in place, a few gun-wielding youth should not be allowed to hold the state to ransom. It is expected that the advantage gained will not be frittered away. Hopefully, sections of the people of Kashmir too will gradually cease to call the killed militants as martyrs.

V. LAKSHMANAN,
Tirupur, Tamil Nadu

The next President

As the Opposition parties conduct talks to choose a presidential candidate, the

move by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president Amit Shah to talk to them is welcome ("BJP to consult Oppn. on next President," May 28). There is some apprehension in the Opposition camp that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) will pick someone with strong saffron leanings and they would definitely like Mr. Shah to clear the air on the matter. An apolitical candidate with impeccable credentials, such as former President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, who was hailed as the 'people's President', would be an apt choice for the post of the country's first citizen.

C.V. ARAVIND,
Bengaluru

Ban on cattle sale

The ban by the Centre on sale of cattle at animal markets for slaughter is a retrograde step taken with little application of mind. ("New restrictions on cattle slaughter," May 27). Livestock rearing is one of the major allied activities of the agrarian populace in the country. With large parts of the country reeling under an unprecedented drought,

the small and marginal farmers are forced to depend on cattle sales for livelihood. In any case, the animals are sold only after they stop giving milk or became infirm. The Centre's ban would impact the country's big meat export industry. The business activities associated with leather would also face grave uncertainties. The allegation by some sections that this has been taken to further marginalise the minorities cannot be brushed aside. It is disgusting that instead of taking action against vigilante groups, the government is pandering to the same forces.

J. ANANTHA PADMANABHAN,
Srirangam, Tamil Nadu

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

The last paragraph of "Rahman lends his voice for stem cell donation" (May 28, 2017, some editions) erroneously gave the number of Datri's registered stem cell donors as 21,000. It should have been 2,16,952.

An article headlined "What Emperor Ashoka knew about free speech" (May 28, 2017, The Public Eye, Comment), referred to the artful management of the tongue as vacāgati. It should have been vacaguti.

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-28552963; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers' Editor, The Hindu, Kasturji Buildings, 859 & 860 Anna Salai, Chennai 600 002, India. All communication must carry the full postal address and telephone number. No personal visits. The Terms of Reference for the Readers' Editor are on www.thehindu.com