If you are getting help from Banking Chronicle, then please support BankingChronicle.co.in by Clicking 1 Ad Daily on the website.

Note: Just 1 Ad, not more than 1. Support Us to Support YOU!
CONGRATULATIONS
2500+
MEMBERS
IN TARGET
GROUP
20% FOR FEW HOURS
DISCOUNT CODE
SBIPO20
www.bankingchronicle.co.in
Morphed freedoms

By seeking an apology while granting bail, the Supreme Court downplayed the misuse of law

The case of a BJP Yuva Morcha functionary being arrested in West Bengal for sharing a morphed image of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee demonstrates how wrong and needlessly oppressive legal processes can turn out to be. The police in Howrah registered a case and arrested Priyanka Sharma under irrelevant and non-existent provisions, a magistrate showed little application of mind while remanding her to judicial custody, and even the Supreme Court, while ordering her immediate release, did not recognise sufficiently the perverse manner in which the law was being used. It is a matter of some consolation that the apex court observed a day later that the arrest was arbitrary and pulled up the West Bengal government for delaying Ms. Sharma's release for technical reasons. The police, apparently realising that there was no offence in the first place, has filed a closure report terming the complaint a 'mistake of fact'. It is a reflection of the level of acrimony between the ruling Trinamool Congress and the BJP in the midst of a violence-marred, multi-phase election that the police entertained a complaint from a Trinamool Congress activist and booked Ms. Sharma for criminal defamation and offences under the provisions of the Information Technology Act. It is possible that some considered the morphed image — in which Ms. Banerjee's face was appended to an actor's photograph at a museum event in New York — defamatory. But it is unclear how the police could arrest someone for defamation based on a third party's complaint.

A cyber-crime police station handled the case, apparently because it involved Section 66-A of the IT Act, a provision declared unconstitutional in 2015, and Section 67-A, which can be used only when sexually explicit material is transmitted in electronic form. Thus, what was at best a case of defamation, a non-cognisable and bailable offence, was projected as a cyber-crime with the sole aim of getting the accused remanded. While magistrates are often known to act mechanically — although that is no excuse for remanding the accused in this case — it is disconcerting that a Bench of the Supreme Court ventured to advise her to apologise for sharing the image on Facebook. The court included a gratuitous sentence in its order that “the detenu shall, however, at the time of release, tender an apology in writing”. The inclusion of an apology requirement gives the impression that the court was more concerned about cooling frayed tempers than about the blatant misuse of the law. Another disconcerting aspect is that the police continue to invoke Section 66-A. In January, the apex court sought the Centre’s response on a petition that claimed that police officials were unaware that the section is no more on the statute book. As the main issue of freedom of expression thrown up by this case is going to be heard in detail later, it is hoped the aberrant developments so far will give way to a reasoned verdict.
Chasing stability

Climate change and energy policies are top of the agenda in Australia’s elections

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison may have, in a manner of speaking, already scored a political victory ahead of the May 18 election. Few had expected the socially conservative politician to last out the remainder of Parliament’s term when he took over as Prime Minister in August following a coup within the ruling Liberal party. In the past, the country has seen many heads of government toppled. That said, Saturday’s election may not prove an easy ride for the former marketing executive. The polls may not signal an end to the political instability that has dogged Australian politics of late. From combating climate change to shaping energy policy, Mr. Morrison’s Liberal party is a divided house between moderates and conservatives. These differences were manifest in the ousting of Malcolm Turnbull last year and continue to elude a resolution. The world’s driest inhabited continent is confronting its own vulnerability to the effects of global warming. Australia, among the world’s largest wheat exporters, has been forced to take recourse to bulk imports of the grain, consequent to severe droughts in its eastern states over two years. Mr. Morrison, a supporter of coal-generated power, may also find his hardline stance on immigration difficult to defend in the wake of the terrorist attacks in neighbouring New Zealand.

The opposition Labor party seems to enjoy an edge over the governing centre-right Liberal-National coalition, according to opinion polls. Its leader, Bill Shorten, has rallied the party during its time in the opposition in the last six years. Labor’s advantage stems from its promise of a living wage, tighter regulation and ambitious targets on carbon emissions. A 45% reduction in carbon emissions on 2005 levels by 2030 is part of its manifesto, aimed at appealing to Australia’s growing number of green voters. Conversely, the pro-business credentials of Mr. Morrison’s Liberal-National coalition are said to have been steadily eroded as the government has reneged on its promise of corporate tax cuts. The package of measures unveiled in the pre-election budget in April may only have a moderate impact. As with several industrialised democracies, voter disillusionment with the principal parties is yielding a fragmented polity, and smaller parties and independents could potentially tilt the balance of power in the Senate, which is crucial for the passage of legislation. With consistent economic growth and modest levels of unemployment, Australia has had a remarkable track record in recent decades. This scenario is in stark contrast to the incessant political swings that impede the legislative agenda. What is without doubt is that the turnout will be high at the polls, as voting is compulsory for registered voters.
Why the Muslim vote matters in U.P.

Marginalised and fearful, Muslim voters want to demonstrate that they still count in India’s democracy

Uttar Pradesh continues to hold the key to political power in the country. The results for the 80 parliamentary seats in this keystone State will decide who governs India. Travelling through five districts of Awadh, including the VIP constituencies of Lucknow, Amethi and Rae Bareli, makes it amply clear that the Muslim vote will play a crucial role in the final outcome.

Tactical voting

There are three interconnected assumptions about Muslim political behaviour, which may not necessarily be accurate. First, they vote en bloc for one candidate or party. Second, they are more strategic in their voting than other demographics. Third, their voting preference is likely to be influenced by clerics or traditional community leaders. While there was little evidence to support this view of Muslim unity in the past as they mostly voted for parties that best protected their interests, in 2019, opposition to the polarising politics of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is clearly influencing electoral preferences and imparting a unity of purpose to the Muslim vote. Although the most important issues for Muslims, as indeed for any voter, are education, health care, jobs and infrastructure, today as a community they feel beleaguered; hence their singular aspiration to vote for the strongest party or alliance that can defeat the BJP.

If previously they did not vote en bloc for any single party, in this election too they are not voting as a homogenous group but there is a strong preference and consolidation behind the mahagathbandhan (the Samajwadi Party-Bahujan Samaj Party-Rashtriya Lok Dal, or SP-BSP-RLD, alliance) because it is more likely than the Congress to overwhelm the BJP. This feeling is so strong that even elite and upper-middle class Muslim families, which have historically had close ties to the Congress in Lucknow, have chosen to vote for the alliance.

Significantly, then, unlike other social groups, Muslims will exercise their vote along ideological lines, and not on the basis of the candidate’s identity. Nonetheless, some Muslims may not vote as a unified entity despite the consciousness that 2019 is a critical election. “This verdict will be the life or death of democracy in India,” said Manzoor Ali from the Giri Institute of Development Studies. This was also evident in scores of voters travelling long distances from different cities to cast their vote on May 6 in Lucknow.

This is not surprising because U.P. — which saw the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992 in Ayodhya, is now run by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, and has been long considered to be the pulse of the Hindi heartland — is the centrepiece of the Hindutva project built largely on creating a fear of Muslims as the Other. This has resulted in fundamental changes in U.P. politics — and more so in Awadh, a BJP stronghold since the days of the Ayodhya movement. The landslide victory of the BJP in 2014 and in the

STUDY MATERIAL PDF’S - https://www.instamojo.com/ankushlamba411/
2017 Assembly elections has seen the consolidation of the Hindu vote under the BJP, while Muslim votes have remained split between the Congress and regional parties. At the same time, many Muslims in Lucknow, Rae Bareli, Amethi, Faizabad and Ayodhya narrate how the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has been sowing seeds of division and splitting up communities.

The BJP has extensively used issues such as national security, terrorism, uber-patriotism and cow protection to construct a ‘Hindu’ constituency. It has tried to exploit its so-called progressive stand on the triple talaq issue to attract Muslims. (After raising the issue with such intensity, ironically the BJP did not give a single ticket to a Muslim woman). It has also tried hard to slice the Shia vote by promoting Shia clerics such as Maulana Kalbe Jawad Naqvi, who issued a statement extending support to Home Minister Rajnath Singh, the BJP candidate from Lucknow. But this was promptly dismissed by most people as inconsequential. So, neither of these efforts is likely to help the BJP in getting a significant chunk of the Muslim vote because of the widely shared perception that it is an anti-Muslim party.

**Fearfulness as cohesion**

Though Muslim identity on the ground is highly fragmented, varying with religious denomination, caste and class, the lack of security and overriding fear have neutralised social differences. Madhavi Kuckreja, a social activist, recalled how a rumour about a stray cattle being injured in a road accident led to anxious guests promptly leaving a walima (wedding reception) to rush back home. Such apprehensions are driven by the fear of the mob and police crackdowns (even when they are the victims of violence). This surcharged environment has been fostered by repeated incidents of mob lynching over perceived cow slaughter, ban on the beef trade and its consumption and the vicious anti-Muslim rhetoric of BJP leaders such as Mr. Adityanath, who portrayed the electoral battle as one between “Ali” and “Bajrang Bali”.

Secularism, in the new political context, has been redefined as Muslim appeasement. It has helped the BJP to gather Hindu support, especially as no party is willing to represent the concerns of Muslims. Democracy and development should go hand in hand. but in U.P. the two do not share a symbiotic relationship.

Hence, political and social equality in terms of roughly proportionate distribution of development benefits and representation eludes them. Muslims in rural areas feel they’ve been left out of government schemes such as the Ujjwala Yojana or in getting financial support to build toilets or homes while other strong contenders in the rural hierarchy are benefiting.

It is indeed odd that though Muslims constitute 43 million of U.P.’s 200 million-strong population, no party is really talking about issues that concern them as the battle for 2019 rages. Instead there is a manufactured silence. Majoritarian impulses, to a greater or lesser degree, are the foundation for the current political discourse, as are caste alliances in which the Muslim voice has little space. Their current marginalisation is a far cry from the time when Muslims were crucial to the political fortunes of parties, especially the
Congress. Today the tendency towards political equality when it comes to the distribution of power or representation is completely missing. Perhaps the Muslim is seen as a liability. In 2019, as in 2014, the BJP has not fielded a single Muslim candidate in U.P., while it is 10 for the mahagathbandhan and eight for the Congress.

This deliberate neglect has had its repercussions. The politics of hate has forced Muslims to give priority to security of life and property. Even more worryingly, they are once again looking to clerics for succour whereas a few years earlier they were beginning to show signs of autonomy and independent thinking, said Athar Husain, Director, Centre for Objective Research and Development in Lucknow. They are getting pushed back into ghettos and into the arms of conservative clerics. Fearing a backlash, they are reluctant to protest against attacks on their livelihoods, food habits, closure of slaughterhouses and meat shops or any other issues that matter to them.

Weapon of the marginalised

Despite the failure of politics which has invisiblised legitimate issues and allowed a radical Hindutva consolidation in their name, Muslims continue to believe in the efficacy of their vote. Even though their representation in Parliament and State legislatures has fallen drastically and development deficits haven’t been addressed, there is no dilution in their electoral participation. What is significant is that discrimination and low representation have not bothered Muslim voters or affected their political engagement with democracy. This is because the vote is a weapon of the weak — a political counter against the concerted effort to render them voiceless and irrelevant. It can establish links between local voices and regional forces, between the politics of community and the idea of citizenship.

By capitalising on their vote, U.P. Muslims today, more than ever, want to demonstrate that they still count in India’s democracy. They are using their vote to demand a new deal which crucially depends on dismantling the BJP’s Hindutva project in India’s heartland.

All out at sea

India’s engagements in the Indian Ocean reveal a tactically proactive but strategically defensive mindset

India is setting a high tempo of naval operations in Asia. In recent weeks, a series of bilateral exercises with regional navies in the Indian Ocean have demonstrated the Indian Navy’s resolve to preserve operational leverage in India’s near seas. In April, in their biggest and most complex exercise, Indian and Australian warships held drills in the Bay of Bengal. This was followed by a much-publicised anti-submarine exercise with the U.S. Navy near Diego Garcia. Last week, the Indian Navy held a joint exercise ‘Varuna’ with the French Navy off the coast of Goa and Karwar. even as two Indian warships
participated in a ‘group sail’ with warships from Japan, the Philippines and the United States on return from a fleet review in Qingdao.

For many, the trigger for India’s newfound zeal at sea is the rapid expansion of China’s naval footprint in the Indian Ocean. Beyond commercial investments in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, China has established a military outpost in Djibouti, a key link in Beijing’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Reports suggest the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is planning an expansion of its logistics base for non-peacekeeping missions, raising the possibility of an operational overlap with the Indian Navy’s areas of interest. As some see it, Djibouti portends a future where China would control key nodes skirting important shipping lanes in the Indian Ocean, allowing the PLA’s Navy (PLAN) to dominate the security dynamic.

Meanwhile, South Asian navies have been making their presence felt in the seas of the subcontinent. In a quest for regional prominence, Sri Lanka has positioned itself as a facilitator of joint regional endeavours, expanding engagement with Pacific powers which includes the Royal Australian Navy and the U.S. Navy. With China’s assistance, Pakistan too is becoming an increasingly potent actor in the northern Indian Ocean, a key region of Indian interest. Beijing has also been instrumental in strengthening the navies of Bangladesh and Myanmar, both increasingly active participants in regional security initiatives. In these circumstances, India has had little option but to intensify its own naval engagements in South Asia.

**Partnerships are key**

Widely acknowledged as the most capable regional maritime force, the Indian Navy has played a prominent role in the fight against non-traditional challenges in the Indian Ocean. While its contribution to the counter-piracy mission off the coast of Somalia, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (including in cyclone-hit Mozambique) has been substantial, a paucity of assets and capacity has forced the Navy to seek partners willing to invest resources in joint security endeavours.

Partnerships are vital to the Indian Navy’s other key undertaking: deterring Chinese undersea deployments in South Asia. For New Delhi, China’s expanding submarine forays in the Indian Ocean indicate Beijing’s strategic ambitions in India’s neighbourhood. Experts reckon PLAN has been studying the operating environment in the Indian Ocean in a larger endeavour to develop capabilities for sustained operations in the littorals. As a result, the Indian Navy’s recent bilateral exercises have focussed on under-sea surveillance and anti-submarine warfare.

To be sure, sightings of Chinese submarine sightings have decreased, which has led some to conclude that Beijing is moving to scale down its maritime operations in the Indian Ocean. After a ‘reset’ of sorts in ties following the Wuhan summit last year, some observers believe India and China are on a collaborative path. New Delhi’s silence on China’s continuing aggression in the South China Sea, and Indian warships being sent for the Chinese fleet review in Qingdao (in April) do suggest a conciliatory stance. Yet, reduced visibility of Chinese submarines does not necessarily prove absence. The truth, as some point out, is that PLAN is on a quest to master undersea ‘quieting’ technologies.
and its new submarines are stealthier than ever. The reason they are not being frequently sighted is because Chinese submarines are quieter and craftier than earlier.

For its part, China has been downplaying its strategic interests in South Asia. It is concerned that too much talk about its growing naval power could prove detrimental to the cause of promoting the BRI. Alarm at the recent BRI summit over Chinese ‘debt traps’ has led Beijing to revise some infrastructure projects. India’s refusal to participate in the BRI may have also prompted China to rethink its economic and military strategies in the Indian Ocean.

**African focus**

Even so, Beijing hasn’t indicated any change of plan in West Asia and the east coast of Africa, where most of China’s energy and resource shipments originate. Chinese investments in port infrastructure in Kenya, Sudan, Tanzania and Mozambique have grown at a steady pace, even as PLAN has sought to expand its presence in the western Indian Ocean. In response, India has moved to deepen its own regional engagement, seeking naval logistical access to French bases in Reunion and Djibouti, where the second phase of ‘Varuna’ will be held later this month.

Yet, India’s Indian Ocean focus makes for an essentially defensive posture. Notwithstanding improvements in bilateral and trilateral naval engagements, it hasn’t succeeded in leveraging partnerships for strategic gains. With India’s political leadership reluctant to militarise the Quadrilateral grouping or to expand naval operations in the Western Pacific, the power-equation with China remains skewed in favour of the latter.

For all its rhetoric surrounding the ‘free and open Indo-Pacific’, New Delhi is yet to take a stand on a ‘rules-based order’ in littoral-Asia. A wariness for sustained operations in China’s Pacific backyard has rendered the Indian Navy’s regional strategy a mere ‘risk management’ tactic, with limited approach to shape events in littoral-Asia.

If you are getting help from Banking Chronicle, then please support BankingChronicle.co.in by Clicking 1 Ad Daily on the website.

Note: Just 1 Ad, not more than 1.

Support Us to Support YOU! :)

Your 1 Click Will Contribute 1rs To Banking Chronicle Daily

So Don’t think About 2-3 Sec

STUDY MATERIAL PDF’S - https://www.instamojo.com/ankushlamba411/