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Cause of Concern: Excessive use of force on protesting citizens & inability to handle crowd



REAL ISSUE

The judicial probe has begun and it will take sometime to find out who was responsible for firing and the deaths. But water cannon or tear gas have to be used first, rather than harsh measures. Passersby, innocents' lives can't be put in danger. If there is prior knowledge about a potential law-and-order issue, administration can take social leaders in confidence to diffuse crisis in advance. Also, composition of force must reflect diversity in the society. The response of police and its softness or harshness towards different groups of society, too requires attention.

[Photo: Shantum Singh, Pexels.com]

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The latest incident that saw killing of five persons, mostly youth, in Sambhal, has once again brought focus on the need for proper crowd control system and the protocol that has to be followed in such cases.

Despite the Places of Worship Act, a claim on the mosque was made and survey was ordered, leading to confusion and anger among residents. Was administration not aware that such sudden intervention of a lawyer and the beginning of the survey, led to panic?

Still, survey began and when the residents gathered, it led to the unfortunate killings of five persons.

Shouldn't the police have first used other ways to ensure that there was no conflict or clash. In recent past, there have been major incidents like youths' protest against Agnipath scheme North, especially, Bihar that damaged trains and railway property, but the police didn't act as harsh.

In Haryana during Jat quota stir, property worth hundreds of crores was burnt, entire Rohtak city was ravaged apart from many districts that saw violence, but police force didn't react with fury.

But in Sambhal (Uttar Pradesh), there were deaths, despite awareness that people were upset over the turn of events. The proper system is that there should not be excessive use of force or brutality on our own citizens.

Any issue has to be tackled with proper plan and if there is a hint or clear signal that there is possibility of reaction, then police can take senior leaders, social workers, activists, community heads in confidence to diffuse the anger.

Also, firing is not an option on own citizens. It is not British Raj that the chest or head are targeted. A judicial probe has begun and hopefully it will be known that who fired and how the anger took such a turn that people were shot dead.

However, once again there is need to impart proper training to police personnel that in any country, any situation can be handled better and there are proper ways.

The use of particular words and terms in media also differs from one place to another.

In some cases, even those who attack and burn property, are termed 'protesters' but in other instances, sections of media media has used words like 'updravi' or those involved in ruckus and attack.

The use of terms in the media reporting and

choice of language apart, it has to be seen when firing takes place readily and what are the circumstances when people get fired upon or when even much more violent protest, is not fired upon and tackled 'softly'.

The composition of police force--personnel and officers, should also reflect society and the diversity. Do all communities get proper representation in the force!

That's an important question. If force doesn't have adequate representation of all groups including different sections of society and communities including the minorities, then it is also not a healthy sign.

Earlier, reports of Commissions on riots have also pointed towards the aspect of police brutality.

In the past too, such incidents occurred and despite video recording and availability of the modern tools, it is an issue that is yet to be properly addressed. Year after year, incidents occur and probe reports, recommendations go to cold storage.

It must be realised that repetition of such incidents are not good for a modern society and a country that is moving fast on different fronts. It affects our prestige and hurts social fabric too. [Photo is for representational purpose]

Gender equality in South Asia: Awards for outstanding contribution in 2024

Sri Lanka's Lalitha Ranjani and Sunil Mohan of India win 3rd Kamla Bhasin Awards for Driving Gender Equality Across South Asia. Special Jury Awards to Jaya Chakma of Bangladesh and Nikhil Taneja of India.

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The Kamla Bhasin Awards 2024 for driving gender equality across South Asia have been awarded to Lalitha Ranjani of Sri Lanka and Sunil Mohan from India. The Special Jury Awards have been conferred upon Jaya Chakma from Bangladesh and Nikhil Taneja from India. The awards were presented on Saturday, 30th November 2024 here at India Habitat Centre, in recognition of the exemplary work carried out by these individuals to challenge patriarchy, promote gender justice, and inspire meaningful societal change. Lalitha Ranjani, trade union activist from Sri Lanka who has spent decades in organising and empowering women. Sunil Mohan, who was earlier captain of Kerala women's cricket team and has dedicated 20 years advocating for gender equity and trans rights, changing lives through legal advocacy & crisis intervention apart from community based initiatives. Jaya Chakma is Bangladesh's first FIFA-accredited female football referee and coach, a pioneer for



women in sports, who hails from Chakma tribe and has shattered barriers. As a coach at the Bangladesh Krira Shikha Protishthan (BKSP), she has led her teams to multiple victories and continues to inspire young girls, especially those from minority communities, to break into male-dominated fields. Nikhil Taneja, a Mumbai-based public speaker, writer, and the CEO of Yuva, has been a relentless advocate for mental health and gender sensitivity among Indian youth. Through his video chat show "Be A Man, Yaar" & his extensive campus outreach across over 100 institutions, Nikhil challenges toxic masculinity. Kamla Bhasin, poet, author, educationist and a pioneer of the

women's rights movement in South Asia. The awards are given under two categories, which include a citation in the form of a trophy and a cheque of INR 100,000 each, and have been jointly given by Azad Foundation, iPartner India and National Foundation for India since 2022. The Special Jury Award consists of a citation in the form of a trophy. The award ceremony was followed by singing of Padma Bhushan Usha Uthup. Former President Of Sri Lanka, Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga was guest of the honour for the award ceremony. In her video message, she said that "Kamla always said that without peace in South Asia, there could be no progress. She believed that walls, when turned sideways,

Become bridges. The awardees were selected by a jury chaired by diplomat and human rights advocate Radhika Coomaraswamy, after a rigorous process. Other jury members included Anu Aga (India), Khushi Kabir (Bangladesh), Binda Pandey (Nepal), Munizae Jahangir (Pakistan) and Namita Bhandare (India). Coomaraswamy said, "This year, the awards attracted candidates from nearly every South Asian country, and we had the privilege of evaluating extraordinary individuals from diverse fields— young men running creative gender equality programs, women involved in non-traditional livelihoods, trade unionists fighting for the rights of working-class women. The awards are given in memory of late Kamla Bhasin [1946- 2021] who was poet, author, educationist and a pioneer of the women's rights movement in South Asia. The awards are given by Azad Foundation, iPartner India and National Foundation for India. In the photo above, Usha Uthup is in the middle and the awardees [left to right] Nikhil Taneja, Sunil Mohan, Lalitha Ranjani and Jaya Chakma.

'Indian Muslims must use political path for solving own community issues'

Despite Places of Worship Act, the claims on mosques are being entertained, says activist

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"It is a sad aspect that despite the Places of Worship Act, one after the other claims on mosques are being made and the complaints get entered, even the cases reach court. That's unfortunate because courts are expected to protect law, remain partial and deliver justice". Activist Mohammad Mahir has issued the statement after the claims on mosques in Sambhal and Badaun were made by right-wing groups recently. Mahir said that the

Muslim community feels anxious and worried, as there is a growing sense that justice is denied. "Earlier, the Babri Masjid case was also decided on the basis of belief and though the Act [1991] exists, any claim is expected and survey is ordered instantly in the case of the most historic mosques. "When lower courts take such a view despite the Places of Worship Act, it is a depressing situation. I appeal to the top bodies of the Muslim community and all pan-Indian organisations that include Muslim Personal Law Board, Jamiat E Ulema and Jamaat

E Islami to turn the community into a political power and work in this direction to ensure that our voice gets political support and the issues could be dealt, properly. The large number of Indian Muslims, fail to get justice because of this lack of political strength. Mahir said that he feels that the right way is to take political path for justice. "Mere hope that things would be resolved and justice would be delivered, is no longer a surety. Need of the hour is political power", he added. editor@asiantribune.net

