

VIEW FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD: NO VIOLENCE

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developing countries on India's interests

Recreating the classic 'mohalle ki Diwali' on Digital?

As campaigning gets into full swing in Bangladesh ahead of the general elections, the November 15 editorial in The Dhaka Tribune recalls the violence in 2013 and urges that every effort is made to avoid a repeat of that situation. The run-up to the January 5, 2014 elections were dark days for Bangladesh. It says: "The run-up to the January 5, 2014 elections were dark days for Bangladesh.

Rather than sit down with the government to try to reach an amicable agreement with respect to the upcoming elections, the BNP (Bangladesh Nationalist Party) declared war on the Bangladeshi people and embarked on a shameful campaign of street violence including bus burnings, that left hundreds dead. Untold damage was done to the country, and we had hoped that, with another general election around the corner, that the days of political violence were finally behind us."

This time around, however, signs have been encouraging "with the government holding sit-downs with different opposition alliances to iron out various disagreements". However, "BNP supporters vandalising vehicles and setting fire to a police pickup truck and patrol car in front of the party office in Naya Paltan." The editorial urges political parties not to turn violent, law enforcement to deal with the Opposition with restraint and "finally, it is incumbent upon the Election Commission to take an even-handed approach, and make it clear that election-related violence will not be tolerated, no matter who does it".

Parliament in turmoil

The political situation in Sri Lanka took an almost bizarre turn when a sitting MP brandished what appeared to be a knife in the country's parliament. According to the November 17 editorial in The Island, "on no grounds can yesterday's ugly scenes in the House be justified. Those who were responsible for them must be condemned unreservedly. President Sirisena and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa cannot absolve themselves of the responsibility for the shameful acts of rowdiness in the House".

It adds: "The UPFA MPs, whose leaders boast of having defeated terrorism and saved democracy, are wreaking havoc on the national legislature in the most despicable manner. It may be difficult for them to come to terms with the fact they failed to muster a working majority after grabbing power and their opponents have more than 120 seats in the House. But that cannot be cited in extenuation of plunging Parliament into chaos. It is high time they started behaving like civilised politicians."

The editorial cites the shifting loyalties of the various political parties to assert that "PM Rajapaksa need not worry about the political consequences of his actions during the last two weeks. President Sirisena has forgiven the UNP, which he accused of being involved in a plot to assassinate him and the Rajapaksas who, he said before the 2015 presidential election, would harm him in the event of his defeat."

The editorial finally hopes "that party leaders, including Sirisena, Rajapaksa and Wickremesinghe will meet over the weekend, discuss the current situation at length and do

everything in their power to put the crisis behind them and ensure that the national budget is presented to Parliament without further delay.”

Imran’s U-turns

“In attempting to address a perception,” begins Dawn’s editorial on November 18, Pakistan Prime Minister [Imran Khan](#) “appears to have unwittingly further exposed the problem”.

Khan’s recent about turns on both political and economic matters have created the impression that the office of prime minister and the complexities of government are proving too much for the PTI chief. In a press conference meant to allay this perception, the opposite seems to have occurred: “According to media reports, Mr Khan defended decisions of his government that have been characterised by political opponents as U-turns. And the prime minister made a rather startling comparison to [Adolf Hitler](#)’s alleged unwillingness to reconsider the German invasion of Russia, which according to Mr Khan’s understanding was a mistake that ultimately led to Hitler’s defeat.”

“Were the remarks merely carelessly framed,” asks the editorial, and asserts that the PM must provide an explanation with regard to the reference to Hitler. “As for the prime minister’s claim that U-turns ought to be lauded as a sign of mature political leadership, the founder of the PTI was following a more familiar political course of blaming shifting circumstances for alleged changes in government policy,” it adds. While accusing the government of a “lack of clarity”, it says: “A willingness to adjust policy to changed circumstances is a necessary and good attribute in a government. But ignorance or a flawed understanding of a problem at the outset will inevitably require an adjustment to reality — which is the nub of the allegation against Mr Khan and his shaky start as prime minister.”

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