

An Indication of Creeping Authoritarianism in the Country!

Our rulers claim that India as a developing nation is a flourishing democracy with constitutionally guaranteed institutional freedoms. But in the experience of the people and the practices of the government under the rule of BJP government under the leadership of Modi it is becoming more and more clear that such a claim is a false one and that by every passing day the ruling system is becoming more authoritarian squeezing even the very nominal freedoms said to have been bestowed by the constitution.

The ruling BJP government is not implemented by it. In some form or other it has been consistently attacking its critics including the media which is supposed to be a fourth estate in democracy. It is resorting to intimidation of its critics by unleashing the regulatory institutions in its control. On the other hand the BJP rulers and the government are vainly attempting to project any criticism against them and their anti-people policies and divisive practices as an affront to the nation of India itself.

Very recently IT (Income Tax) department conducted raids on the BBC's offices in New Delhi and Mumbai, calling it as 'survey', to investigate in to charges related to "transfer pricing" and "diversion of profits". It is unknown who made such charges or whether such charges were invented by the IT department itself at the behest of Modi's government.

But it is conspicuous that the action of IT department came, in the wake of the release of the two-part documentary 'INDIA-the Modi Question'; by BBC. Moreover intimidation of journalists by IT department officials during their so-called 'survey' on accounting/financial matters, clearly reveals the intention of the Modi government, to subject BBC, which criticized him, to unwarranted and brazen intimidation through IT department.

The Modi government which is not satisfied with its orders to online media platforms to delink the documentary of BBC and blocking tweets with links to it, has chosen to intimidate and threaten BBC and coerce it.

On previous occasions the same trick of intimidating media through the raids (survey) of IT was played by the Modi government against the Dainik Bhaskar group, for its national editor wrote an editorial in The New York Times, criticising the government's (Modi's) "failures and deceptions"; during the pandemic. IT officials searched over 32 business and residential premises connected to the group across 9 cities for tax evasion. They visited Newsland and Bharat Samachar's offices in 2021, since both media houses published reports critical of the pandemic. The CBI raided NDTV in 2017. In 2017, the Enforce Directorate conducted "searches" on digital portal NewsClick. In 2022, the digital media-

funding independent and public spirited media foundation and think tank centre for policy research were subjected to such “surveys” as they have published content critical of the union government.

From 2016, such IT raids, (surveys) have drastically increased during the rule of Modi's government. However though from 2016 to 2020, 11,068 cases were prosecuted by the IT department only 266 cases were secured, a 2.4% of conviction rate, which exposes the fallacy of the IT department's cases and its dubious claims.

That the Modi government had severely oppressed the students of JNU, Hyderabad Central University and other universities who have been viewing the documentary released by BBC with brutal police force is a clear indication that BJP government of Modi has adopted a vindictive attitude against BBC for releasing such a documentary criticizing its government and its principal leader.

This action of BJP government is not at all consistent with any democratic norm but is an indicator for the growing authoritarian tendencies of BJP government leading to autocracy.

This is nothing but misuse of governmental machinery against its critics, which needed to be condemned and fought against it to preserve at least the minimum democratic decencies and norms in the country.