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The many shades of the Mappila insurrection

To some, 1921 represents a fight for freedom; to others, it is a case study of class oppression; and to yet another set, it is about a ‘Hindu genocide’.

Different facets

1. Although the 1921 rebellion is often discussed in isolation, this prehistory is integral to making sense of its economic, social, and religious facets. By the 20th century, the Mappilas had been marginalised in the very land where they were once esteemed.
2. Starting in the 1500s, Portuguese terror at sea damaged the trading networks on which so much had been built. And while Mappilas resisted — including militarily and by subverting European efforts to police maritime traffic — in the long run, they lost out.
3. Local Hindu Kings were forced to come to terms with successive European trading companies to protect their turf, with the result that their erstwhile Muslim associates were cornered.
4. As the scholar, Roland Miller wrote, “poverty became the general pattern” by the 18th century, and in crisis, some in the community turned towards a more distinct sense of self and religious identity.
5. At first, Mappila spokesmen such as Zayn al-Din had called for jihad against Europeans; in time that language would be turned against those who represented regional economic injustices also.
6. In other words, as the Mappila stake in society was painfully diluted, religious ideology offered a method by which to valorise resistance. In 1742, for example, British East India Company officials recorded how there were Mappilas who “selected themselves to Murder any Christian” and who, if they died in the process, saw it as “meritorious”.

Poverty and protest:

1. Into the 19th century, which saw colonial laws disproportionately favour landlords against tenants-at-will, the former too became targets.
2. Scholars have noted how as much as 77% of the product could be demanded by the landlord. The fact that a large section of the peasantry in South Malabar — the nucleus of the 1921 rebellion also — was Mappila while landowners



were typically Hindus caused an overlap between economic grievances and religious divisions.

3. The result was a series of “outrages” in which individual Mappilas or small bands launched ritualised suicide missions, killing Hindu grandees and officials.
4. The triggers may have been economic but instances such as in 1852, when a temple was “festooned” with the entrails of a cow, show that these violent outbreaks had religious overtones too.

1921 Revolt:

1. The 1921 revolt, thus, began as a part of the pan-Indian Khilafat Movement, to which even Mahatma Gandhi pledged support. It became a means by which to mobilise as part of a larger struggle.
2. But all at once, it also offered an occasion for Mappilas in British-ruled Malabar to attempt to overthrow not only the colonial government but also the Hindu feudal classes that, in ostensible alliance with the Raj, pressed down on them.
3. The scale of the event cannot be understated: over 2,000 rebels were killed, and nearly 40,000 surrendered. And if the 19th-century “outrages” were isolated flare-ups, this was a large-scale insurrection, validated in a religious vocabulary.

To some, 1921 represents a fight for freedom and a chapter in India’s anti-colonial struggle; to others, it is a case study in the consequences of class oppression; and to yet another set, it is about a “Hindu genocide” at the hands of “terrible” Muslims.

India, Russia to expand Central Asia ties: envoy

India and Russia are expecting to conclude the bilateral logistics agreement, Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS), and a Navy-to- Navy cooperation memorandum of understanding (MoU). The two sides are also looking at expanding cooperation in Central Asia and the possibility of supplementing bilateral exercises with trilateral and multilateral ones.



Highlights:

1. There are specific defence and national security considerations that led India to conclude the contract for the supply of S-400 systems.
2. Both countries are also scheduled to hold the maiden 2+2 ministerial dialogue.
3. Both sides were also looking at how they could cooperate in using India as a production base for exporting to third countries of Russian-origin equipment and services and would add to the Make in India programme. Russia will remain a key defence partner for India for decades to come.

Afghanistan crisis

1. The fast-changing developments in Afghanistan have of course taken everyone by surprise — unexpected as to their speed, as well as their consequences, India said, adding that it was imperative that India and Russia adapt their policies, whatever their policies were in the past.
2. While a number of countries in the region and beyond are affected by the Afghan developments, India and Russia are, in essence, affected even more due to the rise of Islamic fundamentalist and radical groups and the sanctuary that could be claimed by terror groups.
3. This would impact both India and Russia and normal inter-State relations especially with respect to Central Asia, with additional threats emanating from drug trafficking, organized crime and the flow of refugees.

‘Oil palm plan is a recipe for disaster’

Given the widespread destruction of rainforests and native biodiversity caused by oil palm plantations in Southeast Asia, environmental experts and politicians are warning that the Union government’s move to promote their cultivation in the northeastern States and in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands can be disastrous.

Disastrous:

1. Other concerns include the impact on community ownership of tribal lands, as well as the fact that the oil palm is a water-guzzling, monoculture crop with a long gestation period unsuitable for small farmers.



2. However, the government says land productivity for palm oil is higher than that for oilseeds, with Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar giving an assurance that the land identified for oil palm plantations in the northeastern States is already cleared for cultivation.
3. The focus areas are “biodiversity hotspots and ecologically fragile” and oil palm plantations would denude forest cover and destroy the habitat of endangered wildlife.
4. It could also detach tribespeople from their identity linked with the community ownership of land and “wreak havoc on the social fabric”.
5. Proposals for large-scale oil palm cultivation had been studied and rejected as part of the technology mission on edible oils in the late 1980s as it was a “recipe for ecological disaster”.
6. The palm is an invasive species. It is not a natural forest product of northeastern India and its impact on our biodiversity as well as on soil conditions has to be analysed even if it is grown in non-forest areas. Any kind of monoculture plantation is not desirable.

NITI bats for tax breaks to achieve monetisation goal

To make the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) a success, the government should give Income Tax breaks to attract retail investors into instruments such as Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs), the NITI Aayog has recommended.

Highlights:

1. The Centre’s think tank driving the NMP, estimated to raise almost ₹6 lakh crore for the exchequer over four years, has also called for bringing such trusts within the ambit of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) to provide greater comfort to investors.
2. Bringing in policy and regulatory changes to scale up monetisation instruments such as InvITs and Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) and expand their investor base has been identified as a critical element for the NMP.
3. The government plans to use the InvIT and REIT route to monetise public assets such as highways, gas pipelines, railway tracks and power transmission lines.



4. More tax-efficient and user-friendly mechanisms like allowing tax benefits in InvITs as eligible security to invest under Section 54EC of the Income Tax Act, 1961, are important starting points for initiating retail participation in the instruments.

Capital gains offset

1. Section 54EC allows taxpayers to offset long-term capital gains from transactions in immovable properties through investments in bonds issued by some government-backed infrastructure firms.
2. Though this will entail a cost in the form of loss of revenue for the exchequer, the long-term benefits may outweigh the cost as linking investments in specified bonds with the capital gains exemption had proved to be a success in the past.
3. While InvIT structures have been used in India since 2014, Aayog pointed out that such trusts are not considered a 'legal person' and cannot be brought under IBC proceedings, deterring lenders from participating.

'Ransomware will dominate the cybercrime landscape'

Cyberthreats are evolving rapidly and becoming more sophisticated and complex. Operators leverage real-world events to deceive individual victims, enterprises and governments all over the globe, including in India.

What is the latest from the world of 'bad actors'?

1. Ransomware Evil, REvil or Sodinokibi, a ransomware-as-a-service (RaaS) operation has emerged as one of the world's most notorious and latest ransomware operators.
2. This criminal group provides adaptable encryptors and decryptors, infrastructure and services for negotiation communications, and a leak site for publishing stolen data when victims don't pay the ransom demand.
3. Unit 42, a response-ready global team comprising threat researchers and cybersecurity consultants, has been monitoring threat actors involved in ransomware attacks and has worked over a dozen REvil cases so far this year.



What kind of cyberthreats is likely to increase?

1. Ransomware is going to dominate the cybercrime landscape. A report prepared by Unit 42 and The Crypsis Group incident response and digital forensics firm, notified several disturbing threat trends.
2. At least 16 different ransomware variants are now exploiting victims by encrypting and stealing/threatening to expose data. The NetWalker ransomware gang leveraged this tactic the most, having leaked data from 113 victim organisations globally.
3. Industry data indicated healthcare was the most targeted and vulnerable sector in 2020 and the sector continues to be under further attacks by RaaS models.

The cyber mafia has always been trying to keep pace with protection technology. How can we widen the gap?

1. The need of the hour is an integrated platform using ML (machine learning) and AI (artificial intelligence) to lift the burden off cybersecurity teams.
2. Using AI, the frequently observed threat data and multiple threat feeds can be automated and left to ML algorithms that can decipher attack patterns, leaving cybersecurity teams to spend time on advanced threat hunting.