

Indian Express (Chandigarh) May 23, 1992

Coping with US ban

Sir:

The rare unity displayed by all sections of Parliament in condemning with righteous indignation the US ban on trade and technological dealings with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), and the Government's categorical assurance that it would do all that is necessary to protect national honour, dignity and choice in the face of the US ban, does, on the face of it, appear most flattering and satisfying. However, viewed in the light of the situation in which we find ourselves today, as a result of mal administration over the years, one is inclined to feel that our reaction over the humiliation may be mere bravado generally associated with the impotent and imbecile.

One wonders what action, in practical terms, our government has in mind to counter the US ban. With the country neck-deep in debt to agencies that are completely dominated by the United States, leaves few options for us, but the situation created by the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the consequent collapse of the international balance of power, which in turn has enabled the US to don the role of an international bully, leaves us with even fewer options. Whatever these options, however, dissociating ourselves with the oncoming joint naval exercises is certainly not one of them as that may harm us more than it would the US.

It is not to suggest that there is nothing we can do except grovel before the bully. Let our wounded pride urge us to break the shackles of international debt that has made us vulnerable to such blackmail. There is nothing wrong in borrowing so long it is used for increasing productivity and not for breeding corruption as has been happening till now. The best way for the government to protect the honour of the nation would, therefore, be to put an end to waste and corruption within its ranks and ensure proper utilisation of money we are borrowing after staking our national honour.

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