

A RED RED DAY

Guess who stole the thunder on V-Day? Not the sweet couples but protesters of all hues and colours who poured out on to the streets to profess their support for the great day. Beware Mutalik!

BANGALORE MIRROR BUREAU

Valentine's Day was celebrated in Bangalore under the shadow of tight security. Thousands of policemen roamed the streets to maintain law and order. Since the activists of Shri Rama Sene, including Pramod Mutalik, were arrested by the state police, no untoward incident took place in the city. But rather than lovely couples, other organisations rallying for the cause of love, stole the limelight on Valentine's Day.

"Valentine's Day is youthful and it is a day on which you can express your freedom. Celebrate it without fear and we are with you." With these words and promises, various organisations in the city protested against people opposed to Valentine's Day.

THE OTHER SENES

Organisations like Kannada Sene, Hasiru Sene, Karunada Sene, Jayakarnataka, Rakshanavedike, Kannada Vatal Paksha and other organisations occupied centrestage as they protested against enemies of love. They took to the streets and promised love birds in the city that they would pa-



control the streets and guard couples celebrating V-Day.

FRONT RUNNERS

The editor of a Kannada tabloid Agni Sridhar was the front runner in this endeavor. He positioned himself in front of Mahatma Gandhi's statue along with all his supporters as well as leaders of other organisations under the aegis of Youth Freedom Front, and encouraged lovers to go ahead and celebrate V-Day. Sridhar received support from Kodihalli Chandrashekar, a leader of Rytha Sangha and others.

"We are with the youth and we will be guarding them all day long. If at all anybody tries to attack or oppose them, we

will swing into action and provide security. I appeal to people to enjoy the day without any fear," Agni Sridhar said.

"People are trying to snatch away the freedom of youth and this is unforgivable. People opposing this day are mentally ill. Mutalik, Bal Thakare and all the other so called Hindu leaders belong to this category. So, progressive people like us are here to protect the youth from these sick people," he said.

OUT WITH THE WHIPS

Kodihalli Chandrashekar and his supporters of Hasiru Sene participated in the protests with whips in their hands. They said that they were ready



to whip the opponents of love.

VATAL'S PROMISE

As expected, Vatal Nagaraj came out in support of Valentine's Day with a bang. He and other leaders came out on to the roads of Bangalore on a horse carriage. Four horses pulled the carriage. Speaking through the media, he promised Mutalik that he would search for a girl for him. "After analysing the hue and cry raised by Mutalik, I strongly feel he should get married as soon as possible. If he permits me, I will look for a girl," Vatal said.

CHADDIS POUR IN

The people who opposed Mutalik by starting the Pink



PICS: MUTHU P

People aged between 18 and 60 participated in the protests saying, "We believe in love and are ready to get married now itself. We are here to defend the right to love and nobody can object to this."

Protesters then marched to MG road and finally went to a pub in Church Street and en-

joyed a mug of beer. The Save Indian Family Foundation(SIFF), an NGO dedicated to promoting the cause of gender equality and family harmony also carried out protests.

18,000 COPS

Nearly 18,000 police personnel, mostly in plain clothes, were out on the streets of Bangalore keeping an eye on popular youth hangouts like pubs, malls, shopping complexes and hotels.

All these places also stepped up vigil, deploying additional security men to ward off trouble. Finally, Valentine's day did turn out to be a special day and how!



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Renuka's antidote: 'pub bharo'

Says Youths Should Swarm Pubs To Beat Moral Police

Himanshi Dhawan | TNN

New Delhi: Turning the iconic freedom struggle slogan "jail bharo" on its head, Union minister Renuka Choudhary on Thursday suggested that the only way to tackle the moral police was to launch a "pub bharo" andolan.



Chowdhury has been at loggerheads with the Karnataka government for failing to protect women in the aftermath of the Mangalore incident. Not only were women beaten up in a pub last month, but young girls have received threats warning them not to wear "noodle straps or tight jeans" and celebrate Valentine's Day.

"How can the state government allow something (hooliganism) like this to go on? The Centre will have to intervene if the state cannot manage its law and order," Chowdhury said. She added that youths could cock a snook by going to pubs in droves to make their point.

► NCW member Nirmala gets notice, P 13

Mutalik steals thunder, worries BJP

Naheed Ataula | TNN

Bangalore: The Karnataka government's silence on Rashtriya Hindu Sena (RHS) chief Pramod Mutalik's rabid statements has disconcerted the BJP rank and file. Pressure is mounting on home minister V S Acharya to handle the issue firmly.

Agitated over Mutalik stealing the thunder by getting publicity for wrong reasons, BJP's foot soldiers feel it's time the government flexed its muscle instead of soft-peddling the matter. That they feel so is something new to the BJP — a party steeped in conservatism that just stopped short of endorsing Mutalik's stand on pubs and Valentine's Day celebrations.

Consider this: on Thursday, Acharya, after a review meeting, warned the Sri Rama Sene (an offshoot of RHS) of stringent action. But he could not resist a barb against those opposing the Sene's issues. "People need to think if pub and club culture and celebration of Valentine's Day are a good thing to do. The Mangalore pub

LAW AND ORDER



They (Sri Rama Sene) are unnecessarily taking the law into their hands. If they take the law into their hands, law will take its own course.

V S Acharya | HOME MINISTER



I promise I will not take the law into my hands as in Mangalore pub case. I will adhere to the law in my fight for protection of culture and Indian identity. We will protest peacefully in front of restaurants in prime localities.

Pramod Mutalik | SRI RAMA SENE CHIEF

► FULL COVERAGE, P 2

incident (where girls were assaulted) is a closed chapter, and there is no need to talk more about it." However, he promised that the government will not tolerate disruption of Valentine's Day celebrations. Elaborate security arrangements have been made, he claimed.

But some functionaries, like BJP's city spokesperson S Prakash, want Acharya to go beyond this. "Nobody can infringe upon the fundamental rights of citizens. We demand stern action and, if needed, preventive arrests of such elements."

BJP MP Ananth Kumar said: "I feel every citizen has the right to enjoy pleasures in the realm of law which also includes pub. Hence, nobody can take the law into his hands. What Mutalik is doing is wrong." Party insiders have no qualms in admitting that Mutalik's public exposure sans political patronage will impact the BJP. "We are also opposed to banning the Sri Rama Sene as an outfit cannot be banned just because it created

Love Trumps Moral Policing Across Karnataka

Cupid has last laugh

A T Subrahmanya | TNN

Bangalore: Love and peace thrived in perfect harmony in Bangalore and other parts of Karnataka on one of the most-anticipated Valentine's Days ever. Bangalore was swathed in red and pink. Thanks to the police which put away potential disrupters, including Hindu Rashtriya Sena chief Pramod Mutalik, behind bars and the civil society which decided to push back hard against moral policing, V-Day came up smelling roses.

In Bangalore, during the early part of the day, activists supporting V-Day outnumbered revellers. More than teenage lovers, the morning belonged to various support groups

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who took to the streets in the name of love, held impromptu meetings, gave speeches and paraded around the city in colourful — even horse-mounted — cavalcades.

By evening, the boulevards of M G Road and the sidewalks of Brigade Road, Residency Road and other high streets were chock-a-block with youngsters, out with friends and love interests, in throngs. Pubs began to fill up as the sun came down and restaurants reported brisk footfalls. Star eateries, which had sold out their V-day specials, saw couples — young and old — enjoying their romantic dinners serenaded by romantic music and covered by discreet, high security.

The police — many in plain-clothes — ensured the revelry went off peacefully.

The scene was similar in other parts of the state, though the scale and colour of the festivities were a pitch lower than Bangalore. In Mangalore — where the trouble started — discretion trumped public displays of affection as the fear factor kept most inside. At Mysore, it was another regular Valentine's Day. Ditto Hubli — the home of the Sri Rama Sene — where the police apparently outnumbered the revellers.

Celebrations in Belgaum were mostly peaceful except for an incident where Sri Rama Sene activists disrupted a party on the outskirts.

A group of 20 SRS activists barged into a party hosted by employees of an IT company at Wadgaon Towers on the outskirts of Belgaum — an event they mistook for



THEY SAID IT! Activists supporting the celebration of Valentine's Day make a point on Church Street, Bangalore

a Valentine's Day party. They damaged furniture. Three persons have been taken into custody.

Interestingly, Saturday saw more than five organisations come out in open support of the love fest with not one to opposing it. It was a motley collection indeed: Raitha Sangha to Jaya Karnataka with different political objectives but one goal on Saturday.

Other activists gathered in front of the Gandhi Statue on M G Road and Queen's Statue in Cubbon Park, wearing bright red clothes they held up placards, shouted slogans expressing their solidarity with love and lovers, exchanged hugs, kisses and roses. Stickers which stated 'defend the right to love' were distributed. They later went to a pub on Church Street as a symbolic protest against the recent Mangalore pub incident in which some girls were attacked. The Sene hogged limelight following this.

Sibling slip leaves moral cops red-faced

Suchandana Gupta | TNN

Bhopal: Bajrang Dal's moral brigade found itself on the backfoot at Ujjain on Saturday after mistaking a girl and her brother as a couple and beating them up. First, they apologised for having made a mistake, thereafter, they denied the organisation's involvement.

The incident occurred on the campus of Vikram University.

At least 46 self-styled moral policemen were detained in Bhopal and Gwalior. While 35 Shiv Sainiks



MORAL POLICING GOES AWRY?

were detained after they stormed into the Gwalior zoo, seven Shiv Sainiks and four Sanskriti Bachao Manch activists were taken into preventive custody in Bhopal.

In Indore, Askok Jain who runs a marriage bureau was roughed up by a mob of prospective grooms after he failed to

bring the promised number of potential brides in a "parichay sammelan" (introduction convention for a mass wedding). The event was scheduled for Saturday.