

Rajan hits out at cheerleaders, says India has a long way to go

'One-Eyed King' Remark Taken Out Of Context: RBI Guv

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Pune: RBI governor Raghuram Rajan on Wednesday sought to quell the storm over his "India is a one-eyed king" comment, saying that it was an "offhand" remark and was misinterpreted beyond context. But even as he apologized, the governor hit out at those taking needless offence at words, quoting Mahatma Gandhi and digging into etymology of phrases to prove his point.

"I was speaking to a foreign journalist who asked what it felt like to be the bright spot in the world economy. I used the phrase '*andhon me kana raja*' (In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is the king)... My intent was to signal that our outperformance was accentuated because world growth was weak. But we in India were still hungry for more growth," Rajan clarified.

He said few read beyond the headlines and the interview became "moderately controversial, with the implication that I was denigrating our success rather than emphasizing the need to do more".

"My general point is every phrase or word a public figure speaks is intensely wrung for meaning. When words are hung out to dry out of context, as in a newspaper headline, it then becomes fair game for anyone to create mischief. If we are to have a reasonable public dialogue, we

should read words in context. That may, however, be a forlorn hope," said Rajan.

On Monday, commerce minister Nirmala Sitharaman and minister of state for finance Jayant Sinha had said the RBI governor could have chosen better words. Rajan, howe-

"Gandhiji used to say, 'An eye for an eye will only make the whole world go blind'. Clearly, what is implied is that the whole world going blind is not a desirable state of affairs. One might take umbrage since it suggests blindness is an inferior state to that of be-

ve, and pithy, but meaningless for most listeners," the RBI governor said.

Rajan cited another instance where a history professor was offended by her colleague's use of the term 'rule of thumb'. She explained that the phrase referred historically to the maximum width of a stick with which a man could beat his wife without breaking the law. Rajan said that she was angry the male professor used the phrase so lightly, seemingly condoning domestic violence.

"If we spend all our time watching our words and using politically correct language or hedging everything with caveats, we will be dull and not be able to communicate," Rajan said.

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India's potential for growth, Rajan said, is undoubtedly higher. "Growth, however, is just one measure of performance, the level of per capita GDP is also important. There, we are still unfortunately one of the poorest large countries on the per capita basis and still have a long way to go ... As a central banker who has to be pragmatic, I cannot get euphoric if India is the fastest growing large economy," the governor said, adding, "We have to repeat this performance for the next 20 years before we can give every Indian a decent livelihood."

REALITY BYTES

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RAGHURAM RAJAN | GOVERNOR, RBI



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ver, said sometimes using "more correct words" could lack "zing and therefore the ability to persuade".

But even as he apologized to the visually impaired for implying the blind were otherwise than capable, Rajan cited the Mahatma's historic quote to drive home the point why some words are used when they are used.

ing able to see, and the saying could be seen as discriminatory. Yet Gandhiji's focus was on the absurdity of a policy of revenge, not on blindness, and his intent was not to disparage the blind," Rajan said.

He said that the quote could be replaced with a more politically correct, 'Revenge reduces collective welfare'. "The latter is short, inoffensi-

