SC's Order on 'Padmavat'

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Why in news?

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- The Supreme Court has stayed the notifications and orders by certain States to prohibit the exhibition of the movie Padmaavat.
- Click here to know the controversy with the movie.

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What is the rationale?

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- There were apprehensions that states were sympathising with fundamentalist elements for protecting the vote banks.
- Notably, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh have been explicit in voicing support for the protestors who have clearly violated the law.
- However, these were legally masked as “law and order issues” to curtail freedom of expression.
- Freedom of speech is indeed subject to reasonable restrictions (like public order) under article 19.
- But governments should not succumb to the use of “violent threats and intimidations” by fringe groups.
- The SC has thus ruled that states have to balance between the twin responsibility of protecting free speech and maintaining law and order.

- States cannot choose between the two or compromise one for the other as both are important state duties.
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Is the call for a ban justified?

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- The film does not claim any historical accuracy and the protestors taking offence have not even seen the film.
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- Despite this, several cuts were already suggested by a special panel formed by the CBFC to re-examine the film after initial certification.
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- This was in addition to the filmmakers agreeing to change the name of the film from Padmavati to Padmaavat.
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- Notably, Padmaavat was the actual title of the medieval fictional poem which the movie is based on.
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- Given these responses for public sentiments, a further call for a ban seems irrational.
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What lies ahead?

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- The state machinery should keep it responsive but not subdued to the fundamentalist attitudes in the society.
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- The state institutions should take serious note of the SC order to balancing between their varied roles to uphold the constitutional principles.
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Source: The Hindu

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