

All have not gold to give,
but all may yet be kind.

—Robert Herrick

Central
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Founder : Late Shri Ramgopal Maheshwari
Inspiration: Late Shri Prafulla Kumar Maheshwari

EDITORIAL

Rafale Missing Files

The Modi Government is in a fix over missing or stolen files on the fifth generation fighter plane Rafale, a defence deal on which has already been carried out by the Indian Government.

The Rafale case is in hearing before the Supreme Court and Attorney General K.K. Venugopal, on behalf of the government opposed any review of the Apex Court. The AG asked the court to refuse any probe by the CBI in connection to the missing files related to Rafale as it would delay the procurement of the fifth generation fighter aircraft, which is necessary for the Indian Air Force after the recent development with Pakistan.

The Attorney General also pleaded that the court should not take notice of the documents, as they are stolen and that the petitioners Prashant Bhushan, Arun Shourie and Yashwant Sinha have not come to the court with clear hands.

The Attorney General's argu-

ment, however did not find favour with the bench of Chief Justice, Ranjan Gogoi and justices Sanjay Kaul and K.M. Joseph. The bench said that the petitioners have asked for probe into the alleged corruption in Rafale deal and suppose a great crime is committed, will the government take shelter behind official secret act or national security? The court further said that even if stolen documents are cited, the court can always look into it.

Citing an example, the court said, if defense documents could not be looked into by the courts, then there could never have been probe into the Bofors gun deal. The CJ said that the court can understand the AGs plea that the documents are not bonafide, but that the court cannot look into, was taking it too far.

The government does not appear to be out of the woods into the Rafale deal controversy for. The bench said it would pronounce its verdict on the review petition on March 14.

Women speak: To be a woman and to be in India

Shobha Shukla, CNS (Citizen News Service)

Is the situation dismal? In a survey of experts done in 2018, India ranks as the world's most dangerous country for women. It had ranked 4th in the same survey done 7 years ago. The Global Gender Gap Index 2017 by the World Economic Forum placed India at 108 position out of 144 countries benchmarked on the basis of gender parity in the fields of economic participation, education, health and political empowerment. India ranked 131 out of 153 countries in the global Women, Peace, and Security Index 2017-18, that is based upon 11 indicators incorporating inclusion, justice, and security. Despite women accounting for 49% of India's population, only 12% of the seats in the national legislature are held by them. The female labour force participation rate in India fell from 37% in 2006 to 27% in 2017, as per World Bank report, ranking India at 163 out of 181 countries.

SOME SPARKS OF LIGHT
More women are getting educated and coming out of their cocooned existence. They are entering professions that were till recently considered to be the domain of males. They are flying planes, driving e-rickshaws and trains, wielding the surgeon's knife and winning Olympic medals. It is heartening to know that amongst the top 79 global airlines, Indigo Airlines employs maximum percentage of women pilots (14%) followed closely by AirIndia (nearly 10%). Even rural women are becoming more independent, working outside of their homes and exhibiting active leadership at local government level. The Economic Survey 2018 shows that 43% of all gram panchayats (village councils) in India are headed by women.

Two young female staffers at a 5 star hotel told me that though they come from humble backgrounds, their education and job has given them the courage to take their own decisions and to raise their voice against gender injustice. Some domestic helpers said that there are more job opportunities for them today. And though gender equality is a distant dream, they feel more confident than before. A

domestic violence survivor said that girls are now becoming more self sufficient and raising their voices against male dominance. She herself took bold decisions to walk out of an abusive marriage through sheer determination and strong will. Her courage has inspired her daughters to take life's challenges head on and not bow down to the whims of a patriarchal society. Very gratifying indeed!

PROBLEMS AT GROUND LEVEL
Renu Mishra, Executive Director, Association for Advocacy and Legal Initiatives (AALI) rues that the number of women in the

thinks educationist Dr Chitra Singh.

THE WAY FORWARD
Life cannot be a bed of roses, but neither does it have to be a throne of thorns. Renu is emphatic that at a personal level each woman should ensure that she would not allow herself and her family to abide by any patriarchal value system. "All of us will have to, and can, contribute to bringing about gender equality in our own life. Let us not do anything that helps propagate patriarchy. We must also contribute to have an enabling environment at home, in schools and outside where girls/women can speak

child marriage, equal inheritance of property, curbing of sexual and domestic violence, etc. However, lack of political will power and a deeply entrenched patriarchal society makes their implementation very poor. Moreover, most women- even the educated and working women- do not have much knowledge about them and many are clueless even about their existence.

She wants these laws to be part of the education curriculum, to make women, as well as men, informed about them. Also, the government's Information and Broadcasting Ministry needs to play a more proactive role in spreading awareness around these laws and government welfare schemes for women/girls, through channels like radio, television, newspapers, and billboards. It is the onus of the government to disseminate all this information, and then act on speedy delivery of redressals if it is really keen for women to benefit from them. One reason for rise in the number of sexual offences is no quick redressal—the case could drag on for long and/or accused goes scot free in most cases.

Recognising that women in today's world have to balance multiple responsibilities at home as well as outside, Dr Soumya Swaminathan, Deputy Director General for Programmes at the World Health Organization (WHO), urges women to take care of their own health—both physical and mental health. In an exclusive interview given to CNS, she said that "Women play a very big role in healthcare delivery. Not only do women constitute the majority workforce in nursing and community healthcare work, they are also the main caregivers within households and communities. But their efforts are often taken for granted and are not publicly recognised. I would like to put the spotlight on these women who are providing healthcare either in formal or informal settings. We should appreciate this unrecognised army of women healthcare providers, and ensure that they are able to provide these services in a labour and time saving manner."

"This is more so in rural areas where girls' schools are still not a plenty and parents do not feel safe for their daughters to travel long distances. Also most rural schools have poor toilet facilities, which is another deterrent for girls. Patriarchal mindsets when coupled with poor economical status, make matters worse. They think it is a waste of their meagre resources to spend on the daughter's education, as she will have to be married off. They would rather educate the sons who they think would support them financially later on".

work force is dismally low and even those who are working do not get equal wages as compared to their male counterparts. Women do not even have the right to take personal decisions; they do not have the right to enter into matrimony or walk out of a relationship of their own choice.

For Dr Pooja Ramakant, breast cancer and endocrine surgeon, striking a balance between family and career is a huge problem for women of her age. "As a female surgeon, I have to struggle more than my male counterparts. Why is a woman expected to fit in the framework designed by a patriarchal society and conform to the social norms laid down by others, even if they are detrimental for her own well being? I have come across many financially independent women also who suffer in silence and stay in abusive marriages. Perhaps, due to emotional weakness, they are scared of what others will say", shares Pooja.

Even though more and more girls are going to school, education of the girl child is still beset with problems,

openly and fearlessly".

Pooja exhorts women to speak up and not remain silent- "I do not remain silent if I see any injustice being done to a woman. Rather I make it a point to speak and make my voice heard and I face such situations very often in my professional life. I encourage my young girl students (interns) to not get demotivated by society, but make their own informed choices regarding their professional and family life. Also, women should insist on an equitable distribution of work between all members of the family. Men will have to contribute equally to household work and responsibilities. Let us not forget that all women are working women, whether employed or not."

Chitra wants all girls to get at least some basic education plus job oriented skills to make them employable. They should not be married till they are economically independent.

Renu, who is also a lawyer, is happy that India has several women friendly laws on girls' education, prohibition of

Symbiotic relationship

Sujit De

If I have got a headache, I must not cut my head off from my body as it will destroy both my head and my body. Similarly, if there is a problem of deforestation, we must not uproot forest dwellers out of the forests as it will destroy both the forest dwellers and our forests. Indeed, forest dwellers have a symbiotic relationship with the forest.

A report by "Forests trends and Eco-agriculture partners" recognised community forest management as "an essential means to sustainably manage forest resources while supporting local livelihoods and cultural values."

It is a shame that instead of rewarding Adivasis and other forest dwellers for their outstanding contribution towards protecting the forests of our country, there is an effort to hold them responsible for deforestation. Forest dwellers preserve forests not just as their habitation but as God. They worship the ecosystem as a spiritual being.

Now, let us focus on the Bishnoi tribe of Rajasthan.

They derive their name from the set of 29 (bish = 20 + noi = 9) rules which they are supposed to honour. Some of these rules showcase the spiritual relationship between them and the forest like don't cut green trees (runkh lila nahi ghave) and provide a common shelter for all abandoned animals so that they are not slaughtered (amar rakhe that). Felling trees and killing animals are

wood and air pollution.

To minimize the use of green trees, they use cow dung cakes as fuels for cooking. They only collect dead wood. Even a carpenter waits patiently for a tree to fall. Bishnois have been fighting court cases and poachers no matter how big the suspect may be - even if he is as famous as Mansur Ali Khan of Pataudi or Salman Khan of Bollywood.

A woman named Amrita Devi Bishnoi led the protesters and requested the soldiers to spare the trees. But the soldiers did not pay heed to their request. They went to chop off the trees. Then Amrita Devi along with her three daughters hugged a tree in order to save it from the axe of the soldiers.

treated as crimes in Bishnoi society.

The Bishnois are rightly called the first environmentalists of India. They build water storage tanks that can store rain water for humans and animals. They bury the deceased instead of following their religious tradition to cremate the dead body. They do it to avoid wastage of fire-

Legend has it that as many as 363 Bishnoi men, women and children sacrificed their lives to save khejri trees in 1730, when the king of Jodhpur, Maharaja Abhaya Singh ordered to cut the trees in large number for collecting timber. A woman named Amrita Devi Bishnoi led the protesters and requested the soldiers to

spare the trees. But the soldiers did not pay heed to their request. They went to chop off the trees. Then Amrita Devi along with her three daughters hugged a tree in order to save it from the axe of the soldiers. But her head was severed from her body. Others hugged khejri trees to save them but they were also killed. But the Bishnois stuck to the rule of non-violence during the massacre.

This legend inspired Sunderlal Bahuguna to launch the Chipko movement and Mahatma Gandhi to start the non-violent struggle. As a matter of fact, we have a lot things to learn from the forest dwellers. The most important thing is to have a friendly relation with the environment.

Indeed, the environment and the lives of the forest dwellers got improved in less than three per cent of the forest cover of India where traditional inhabitants became managers of their forest land. Undoubtedly, we need to immediately implement the Forest Rights Act in the remaining 97 per cent of the forest area.

IAF chief declined to comment on the death

IAF chief B S Dhanoa on Monday declined to comment on the death toll in the Balakot strike, saying it was for the government to provide details on the number of terrorists killed and the Air Force only sees if a target has been hit or not. He is absolutely right. But the reality is that in war there is no a feeling of compassion, and in the war nobody wins at all. War is a battle waged between two or more nations where raging revenge is showered on each other.

Can a nation really win a war? Certainly not. War always kills people and killing people can not be a happy thing. So, in the interest of the mankind, nations must stop using force to kill people. As the human beings march forward from barbarianism to a civilised world, war is sure to elude us and ultimately perfect peace and harmony would come to stay. Once we stop earmarking the budgetary allocation of astronomical amount for defence, we will have the sure chance of spending a whopping amount for the welfare of people.

Let us all look forward to such a peaceful and prosper-

ous world sans war.

F-16 misuse by Pakistan

Pakistan is now in the soup over the misuse of F-16 as the US is seeking more information on its misuse by Pakistan against India recently. However, Pakistan on Wednesday categorically said that no F-16 fighter jets were used and denied that one of its planes had been downed by the Indian Air Force. Pakistan managed to acquire American fighter jets from the US by agreeing to certain kinds of terms and conditions and they forgot it all in the heat of hatred against India.

This exposes the hard truth that Pakistan will go any extreme to defeat India by hook or by crook. The US has convinced of Pakistan's violation of the end-user agreement of the F-16 fighter jets, and the US has taken strong exception to that. How can the US further trust this nation which blows hot and cold every now and then about its policies towards India?

TK Nandan, Kochi

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When humble Dhoni declined to inaugurate the Dhoni pavilion

Mahendra Singh Dhoni is a modest man and no wonder he has politely declined to inaugurate the 'Mahendra Singh Dhoni Pavilion' at the JSCA Stadium, ahead of India's third ODI against Australia. "At the AGM last year, the decision was taken that the North Block stand that comprises media enclosure as well as VIP boxes would be named after Dhoni," Jharkhand State Cricket Association (JSCA) secretary Debashis Chakraborty told PTI on Wednesday. However, Dhoni didn't agree to inaugurate the stand, said Chakraborty. "We requested him but he said Dada apne hi ghar mein kya inaugurate karna (What's there to inaugurate in my own house). He is

still so humble and down to earth," said Chakraborty. The former Indian captain, Chakraborty said, made it clear that if he did the inauguration, it will make him feel that he is "not a part of this ground" and that he is thankful to the JSCA to have given him this recognition. "This left me in an awkward spot but this shows his graciousness," Chakraborty added. The third ODI between India and Australia will be held on Friday. India are currently leading the five-match series by a margin of 2-0 after beating the visitors in Hyderabad and Nagpur. MD Hasiburrahman

Why Jai-Hind only in Air India: Should be in all flights of private airlines also

It refers to former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir Mahbooba Mufti now making undesired comments on Air India directive to say Jai-Hind after every flight-announcement has come when such non-patriotic comments may attract action by law-enforcing agencies.

Instead Union Ministry of Civil Aviation and Directorate General of Civil Aviation should immediately

issue directive to all private airlines of India for saying Jai-Hind after every flight-announcement in case private airlines do not by themselves follow Air India in this respect.

Such and similar steps will further strengthen feeling of patriotism amongst flight-passengers in the country, which will provide an appreciable image of India in foreigners travelling in domestic flights in India.

MADHU AGRAWAL

Opinion

Please send your letters and articles to chroniclebp@gmail.com