

Rathore case

THIS is with reference to the Cover Story "Delayed justice" (January 29). The entire episode is an embarrassment to Indian democracy and its claims of women's empowerment. The justice delivery system needs an overhaul so that cases of harassment of women can be dealt with sternly and swiftly, for justice has not only to be done but has to be seen to be done.

The incident also shows that women's organisations have not been able to act effectively in the interests of women. A separate women's court could be an option.

SYED KHAJA

NEW DELHI

NEITHER law enforcement authorities nor the government made any effort to ensure justice in this case. The sheer courage and determination of the people involved – the victim's father and her friend – put pressure upon the government to take a stand.

Police officials are supposed to protect us and not take advantage of us.

SIDDHARTHA SHANKAR
MISHRA

BUDHARAJA, ORISSA

DESPITE clear evidence, the first information report (FIR) against Rathore was registered only ten years after the incident during which period he continued to enjoy power and get promotions until retirement. This speaks volumes about the rot that has crept into

Commemorative issue

HEARTIEST congratulations to *Frontline* on its 25 years of news service. I am an ardent reader and a regular subscriber, not from the inaugural issue but an issue before that, the inaugural "dummy issue". Its cover had a picture of an injured Khalistan extremist. For the first time in India a magazine came out in glazed paper and with eye-catching pictures. I was happy to receive such a magazine at my village, otherwise I would have had to go to the college and university library.

I have all the copies of *Frontline* and still I have no mind to dispose of them.

S. PRAKASH

MUTHARASANALLUR, TAMIL NADU

the system. Worse still is the minor punishment awarded by the court after an outrageous dragging on of the case for 19 years. Both the Centre and the State are guilty of protecting the perpetrator of a heinous crime.

One must appreciate the grit and determination with which both the victim's family and that of her close friend fought to get justice.

K.R. SRINIVASAN

SECUNDERABAD

THE Cover Story exposes the decay that has crept into India's law enforcement machinery and criminal justice system. The nexus between politicians, the police and bureaucrats is the foremost cause of lawlessness. The reality is that people with criminal records get elected, which shows how void our democracy is.

If the powers of appointing, promoting and transferring police officers are

withdrawn from political leaders and the bureaucracy, half the battle could be won.

VINOD C. DIXIT

AHMEDABAD

Child rights

THE recent report of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) highlights the dangers children face in the period of the global financial crisis ("Who cares?", January 29).

The powers that be should respond to its recommendation that basic health services for poor children and women be stepped up.

S.V. VENUGOPALAN

CHENNAI

Great pathologist

THE story of Dr S.S. Sriramachari was very touching ("Medical explorer", Janu-

ary 29). He was perhaps the greatest pathologist of contemporary India. It is sad he was not appreciated by the government or the scientific community for his analysis of and conclusions on the effects of the Bhopal gas tragedy on human physiology.

D. BALASUBRAMANIAN

HYDERABAD

Indian hornbill

I CONGRATULATE the photographer for his patience in capturing the Indian hornbill in its natural habitat and taking such impressive photographs ("Cry from the Ghats", January 29).

CAPT.MANOHAR NAMBIAR

MUMBAI

THE photographs of the great Indian hornbill were very captivating. They reflect the wonder that is nature. Such photographs and articles generate more interest in wildlife conservation.

BENOY JOHN

MASJID TANAH, MELAKA,
MALAYSIA

Anniversary issue

THE history of India in the past 25 years has been brought alive in successive issues of *Frontline* (Special issue, January 15).

G. SURESH DHAS

CHENNAI

I AM a subscriber to *Frontline* since its inception and have nearly all the issues. I lend them to my past students who are preparing for

Egypt and Palestine

Dr Mohamed Higazy
Ambassador of the Arab Republic
of Egypt

I READ with utmost interest your article entitled “Grim anniversary” (January 29). While we share the condemnation of the subhuman conditions in the Gaza Strip one year after the Israeli incursion, and your pinpointing the Israeli blockade as the source of such suffering, I would like to clarify a few points concerning Egypt’s position with regard to the situation on its border with the Gaza Strip.

At the outset, I wish to refer to the historical role Egypt has played in supporting the Palestinian cause for many decades, not only politically and economically but also militarily. Egypt fought four wars in support of this cause. It was always in the forefront of countries backing the Palestinian issue and the need to achieve a just, permanent and peaceful settlement to the conflict along the lines of international resolutions and legalities guaranteeing the Palestinian right.

As for the present situation in Gaza, I wish to emphasise Egypt’s leading role since the Israeli military attack in December 2008. Egypt not

only condemned Israeli actions but also led the international efforts to bring an end to these atrocious acts. This culminated in Security Council Resolution 1860 in January 2009, which called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza leading to a full Israeli withdrawal, and the unimpeded provision throughout Gaza of food, fuel and medical treatment. This resolution specifically welcomed the Egyptian efforts, which reflects the extensive diplomatic work done by Egypt to end that situation. As a subsequent effort, Egypt hosted in Sharm El Sheik in March 2009 the International Conference for the Reconstruction of Gaza, in which India took part. As an outcome of the conference, international donors raised \$4.5 billion.

As for your reference to the Rafah crossing issue, needless to say, Israel as an occupying force is totally responsible for the closure of the border gates linking it to Gaza and also bears the full legal responsibility – according to international law – for the well-being of the citizens under its occupation; hence, international efforts

should continue to pressure Israel to reopen the closed gates.

The Rafah crossing is reserved only for individuals, and Egypt has been – since the start of the current stalemate – opening it regularly for the passage of individuals, humanitarian assistance, medical equipment and medicine. Other materials have to cross through the other six border gates under Israeli control.

Egypt’s handling of the Rafah crossing comes under the ambit of a legal agreement signed in 2005 between Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and the European Union, which allows the passage of individuals under the supervision of European observers (this agreement has ceased to be in force since the takeover of the Gaza Strip by Hamas in 2007). The Rafah crossing can once again be fully operational in the context of the reconciliation agreement negotiated by the two Palestinian factions, under the auspices of Egypt. This agreement was signed by the Palestinian Authority; unfortunately, to date Hamas has not signed it.

The most important issue related

competitive examinations, which proves that the magazine has a lasting value. The effort in bringing out this issue is commendable.

R.M. HONAKERI

SHIGLI, KARNATAKA

THE issue highlights *Frontline*’s role in social responsibility by focussing on public issues, which reminds leaders and those in the bureaucracy of their duty. I have been reading the magazine for over a decade.

Y. ABHIMANYA

NALAGONDA, A.P.

IN a country where the reading public is small, it is

amazing that *Frontline* has been so successful in its journey. Reading this issue was rewarding.

As a long-time reader of this magazine, I share the editorial team’s pleasure in bringing out this useful number.

VIJAYAKUMAR

MADURAI, TAMIL NADU

THIS issue covered the past 25 years judiciously, with an essay for all aspects of India’s recent history. It took me down memory lane.

I have been reading *Frontline* for the better part of 25 years and respect it for

its level-headed journalism.

MADHU B. THAKER

VALLABH VIDYANAGAR,

GUJARAT

WHILE congratulating you for bringing out this issue, I would like to point out that the issue did not have a selection of letters written to the magazine over the 25 years.

Moreover, the regular “letters” page was also dropped.

T.N. TANDON

LUCKNOW

K.N. PANIKKAR’S analysis of the impact of Hindutva forces on Indian society and

politics (“The Hindutva ride”, January 15) was interesting reading. However, the often meticulous organisation and execution of communal violence by members of the Sangh Parivar is not a phenomenon that only emerged in the 21st century.

The American political scientist Paul Brass has shown how much of the so-called communal violence of the late 20th century was not particularly “spontaneous” in nature but was the result of the operation of an institutionalised system of

to the Rafah crossing and its opening is that recognising it as an international border will lead to a geographical division between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and will split the Palestinian territories into two parts. It will also lead to a demographic and political partition that will harm the Palestinian cause in the worst possible way.

What is more dangerous is that it will ease the legal responsibility Israel has as an occupying force that has obligations in accordance with international law; the 1949 Geneva Convention specified the obligations that the occupying force has to maintain *vis-a-vis* the rights and welfare of the people under its occupation. Therefore, Egypt, while handling with sensitivity the issue of the Rafah crossing, is cognisant that any change in its status will have negative political, geographical, legal and demographic implications on the status of the Palestinian people, their land, and the future of their cause.

In reference to the turbulent passage of the "Lifeline 3 Convoy" led by British MP George Galloway to Gaza, I would like to clarify the fact that it was the third convoy of its nature organised by him and authorised to enter Egyptian territory. However, what

happened to this third convoy was because the actions of its organisers were not in conformity with the regulations set by the Egyptian authorities for the crossing of such convoys through Egypt. Such regulations were previously made clear to Mr Galloway through two official notes sent to him by the Egyptian Embassy in London, one before the departure of the convoy in November 2009 and the other after the departure of the convoy in December 2009 and before its arrival in Egypt. These two notes confirmed the mechanism specified by the Egyptian government and underscored the necessity of the entry of the humanitarian relief through Al Arish port (which is very close to the Rafah crossing). However, Mr Galloway disregarded the relevant regulations and directed the convoy through Jordan. It then proceeded to the port of Aqaba so as to enter Egypt through the port of Nuweiba, which is in the southern part of Sinai and far away from the Rafah crossing.

As for the issue of the Egyptian engineering works on the Egyptian side of the border side with the Gaza Strip, it should be seen, with no doubt, as a matter of national security and sovereignty as long it is on Egyptian soil. Moreover, the objective of

such work is to protect Egypt against the continuous smuggling happening on its borders with Gaza. Thus, Egypt is only trying to protect its interests and national security without undermining its obligation and duty towards the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.

Egypt has been allowing the passage of thousands of tonnes of medicine, medical equipment, food, and in addition it received hundreds of injured Palestinians in its hospitals and allowed the passage of Palestinian pilgrims during the Hajj season.

Finally, let me assure you that Egypt is fully aware of its ethical responsibility and commitment towards the Palestinian cause. At present, Egypt is also working with Palestinians, Israelis and the international community to launch a meaningful negotiation between the two parties covering the final status issues, namely, the status of refugees, Jerusalem, settlements, borders, water, and security. Moreover, Egypt will relentlessly pursue efforts towards achieving Palestinian reconciliation for restoring national Palestinian unity, which is the sole guarantor of a stable and prosperous Palestinian state living side by side with the state of Israel.

riots organised and managed by the Sangh Parivar and targeted at minority populations.

KENNETH BO NIELSEN
OSLO, NORWAY

Gender identity

THE interview with the transgender activist Priya Babu (January 1) was timely. Mainstream media often neglect such issues unless there is scope for sensationalism. The plight of the downtrodden often finds space in *Frontline*. Most of us live in a dream world, not

knowing what people out there suffer.

R. SHAJI
CALICUT, KERALA

Telangana

THE article "Reorganisation, then and now" (January 1) said that the States Reorganisation Commission was initially against the unification of Telangana with Andhra. This inference was made on the basis of Paragraph 378 of the SRC's 1955 report.

Para 378 is actually referring to the "apprehension

felt" by Telangana's people. It is worth looking at some of the preceding and following paragraphs. Para 375 says: "The case of Vishalandhra thus rests on arguments which are impressive." "The advantages of the formation of Vishalandhra are obvious" (Para 381). "It seems to us, therefore, that there is much to be said for the formation of the larger state and that nothing should be done to impede the realisation of that goal" (Para 382). Then, the report suggests that it is better to wait until 1961: "The

intervening period may incidentally provide an opportunity for allaying apprehensions and achieving the consensus of opinion necessary for a real union ..." (Para 387). "Andhra and Telangana have common interests and we hope these interests will tend to bring the people closer to each other" (Para 388).

M. JANA MITRA
HYDERABAD

ANNOUNCEMENT

Letters, whether by surface mail or e-mail, must carry the full postal address and the full name, or the name with initials.