

## **JUSTICE, SLOW BUT SURE: ON RAJASTHAN EX-ROYAL MURDER CASE**

**Conviction of police for passing off murder as an 'encounter' is welcome, though delayed**

It is not often that policemen involved in shooting people dead and seeking to cover up the incident as an armed encounter are convicted for murder. The verdict of the Sessions Court in Mathura sentencing 11 police personnel, including a DSP, to life for murdering Raja Man Singh, the head of the princely state of Bharatpur in Rajasthan, and two of his associates, in 1985, is one such rare instance. While welcoming this rare blow for accountability and justice, it is inevitable that one must lament the tardiness of the criminal justice system. Even accounting for the usual or expected delay in prosecuting police personnel, the 35 years that it took for the case to complete the trial stage is further evidence that justice moves in slow motion in this country. There are several long-delayed trials that spanned generations. The trial of the men who assassinated Railway Minister L.N. Mishra in January 1975 ended in conviction in 2014, a good 39 years later. The Hashimpura case, in which nearly 40 Muslims were massacred in 1987, ended with an en masse acquittal in 2015, but the Delhi High Court restored some faith in the judicial process by slapping lifelong prison terms on 16 men three years later. While convictions in heinous crimes ought to be welcomed regardless of the long delay, those administering criminal law will have to explain how far finding old and infirm people guilty after letting them enjoy decades of impunity really serves the cause of justice. Fortunately, the delay did not affect the outcome in this case, but it does not mean there is no truth in the old axiom that delay amounts to denial of justice.

The election-time murder of Raja Man Singh at Deeg on February 21, 1985, was initially sought to be passed off as an 'encounter'. The previous day, the titular head, a seven-time independent legislator, had apparently felt insulted on hearing that his family flag had been damaged by Congress supporters. In a fit of rage, he drove his jeep into the stage put up for then Congress Chief Minister Shiv Charan Mathur's rally, and went on to damage a helicopter used by the Chief Minister. The next day, as the Raja was on his way to surrender, his jeep was surrounded by a party led by the DSP and others. Eye-witnesses said they fired at the vehicle's occupants, killing Man Singh and his two elderly associates. Later, top police officials admitted the former ruler was not armed. The then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, asked Chief Minister Mathur to step down. The investigation was transferred to the Central Bureau of Investigation. Later, the Supreme Court shifted the trial to Mathura in Uttar Pradesh. It may not be known if Congress leaders conspired with the police, but the incident remains a blot on the party's record in the 1980s.

### **Meanings of Difficult Words:**

- ❖ **conviction** (noun) – sentence, judgement, verdict.
- ❖ **pass off** (phrasal verb) – deceive, make up, pretend, misrepresent/misreport, falsify.
- ❖ **cover up** (phrasal verb) – conceal, hide, suppress, keep secret, gloss over (an illicit activity).
- ❖ **convict** (verb) – declare guilty, give a sentence.
- ❖ **sentence** (verb) – punish, convict.
- ❖ **personnel** (noun) – staff, employees, workforce.
- ❖ **seek** (verb) – try, attempt.

- ❖ **princely state** (noun) – Native States under a local or regional ruler, existed in India before the partition of India in 1947.
- ❖ **associate** (noun) – supporter.
- ❖ **blow** (noun) – shock, surprise, rude awakening; misfortune, setback, disappointment.
- ❖ **accountability** (noun) – responsibility, liability, answerability.
- ❖ **inevitable** (adjective) – unavoidable, unpreventable.
- ❖ **lament** (verb) – protest against, speak out against, object to, oppose; mourn, grieve.
- ❖ **tardiness** (noun) – belatedness, unpunctuality, lateness/delay.
- ❖ **account for** (phrasal verb) – consider, regard as, view as, judge/deem.
- ❖ **prosecute** (verb) – take to court, institute legal action against, charge with, accuse of.
- ❖ **trial** (noun) – court case, lawsuit, hearing, inquiry.
- ❖ **span** (verb) – range over, last, extend over (a period of time).
- ❖ **assassinate** (verb) – murder, kill, execute.
- ❖ **massacre** (verb) – murder, kill, destroy, decimate (many people).
- ❖ **en masse** (adverb) – in a mass, all together, as a group.
- ❖ **acquittal** (noun) – declaration of innocence, clearing, discharge, release, vindication, exoneration.
- ❖ **slap on** (verb) – impose, put on, add (case/penalty/fine).
- ❖ **heinous** (adjective) – extremely bad & evil, shocking, horrible/wicked.
- ❖ **ought to** (modal verb) – must, should.
- ❖ **regardless of** (phrase) – irrespective of, without consideration of, notwithstanding, in spite of.
- ❖ **administer** (verb) – manage, direct, control, operate, regulate.
- ❖ **infirm** (adjective) – weak, feeble, unwell/in poor health.
- ❖ **impunity** (noun) – immunity, exemption/freedom from punishment, special treatment.
- ❖ **axiom** (noun) – saying, adage, truism, accepted truth.
- ❖ **amount to** (verb) – be regarded as, be equivalent/equal to.
- ❖ **titular** (adjective) – nominal, in name only, formal.
- ❖ **apparently** (adverb) – seemingly, evidently, it appears that.
- ❖ **In a fit of rage** (phrase) – to display a very bad & uncontrolled anger.
- ❖ **put up** (phrasal verb) – build, construct, erect, set up.
- ❖ **go on to** (phrasal verb) – continue, proceed (to do something).
- ❖ **fire** (verb) – shoot, discharge (a gun).
- ❖ **occupant** (noun) – occupier.
- ❖ **arm** (verb) – provide, furnish, equip (with weapons).
- ❖ **step down** (phrasal verb) – resign, give up one's post, stand down.
- ❖ **conspire** (verb) – plot, collude, collaborate, intrigue; work/act together.
- ❖ **blot** (noun) – disgrace, dishonour, stigma.

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## ANOTHER FRONT: ON INDIA, BHUTAN AND CHINA

### India and Bhutan must have complete understanding on dealing with China's claims

For the third time since early June, China on Tuesday repeated its claim that Bhutan's eastern boundary was a "disputed" area with Bhutan. Its first claim was at a UNDP-led Global Environment Facility conference on June 2-3, when the Chinese representative tried to stop funding for the Sakteng forest reserve in Bhutan's eastern district of Trashigang, which abuts Arunachal

Pradesh's Tawang district. The claim was surprising for several reasons: China has not objected earlier to funding provided to the sanctuary at the GEF. Second, the Trashigang area does not share a boundary with China. Finally, whatever the origins of the claim, Chinese officials have not raised the eastern boundary in 24 rounds of talks with Bhutan, that began in 1984. Thus far, talks have been only about the Pasamlung and Jakarlung valleys in Bhutan's north, and Doklam and other pasturelands to the west, that come up to the trijunction point with India. On Wednesday, China referred to a "package solution" for the dispute, that is believed to refer to an offer made in the 1990s to swap the northern and western areas, something Bhutan rejected given India's concerns. Bhutan's response at the start was to reject China's claim at the GEF, and it was able to secure the funding. Subsequently the Bhutanese Embassy in Delhi served a *démarche* to the Chinese Embassy (Bhutan does not have diplomatic relations with China), but the Chinese MFA repeated the claim in early July, and then again this week. Bhutan has now appeared to take a sober view of China's claims by saying that all disputes would be taken up in the next round of China-Bhutan talks. Talks — the last round was in 2016 — have been put off due to the Doklam stand-off in 2017, elections in 2018, and the pandemic this year.

Despite Beijing's repeated statements on the boundary issue, both Thimphu and New Delhi have chosen not to react in a rash manner. For Bhutan, the Chinese claim may be seen as a pressure tactic: an attempt to hurry the scheduling of the next meeting, or to gain leverage in the boundary talks. For India, that is already dealing with Chinese aggression across the Line of Actual Control, the Sakteng claim could be a diversionary tactic, or one aimed at driving a wedge between India and Bhutan. More significantly, by claiming Bhutan's eastern boundary, China is attempting to double down on its claims over Arunachal Pradesh, neither of which it has lien on or control of. The repetition of its "package" offer is worrying as it implies that Beijing is not giving up its push for the Doklam plateau, where it has consolidated its military infrastructure and would like to inch towards India's Chumbi valley, a strategically sensitive location. No matter what Beijing's designs are behind its new claims in Bhutan, New Delhi and Thimphu must stay the course, with the close cooperation and complete understanding they have shared for decades, in order to respond to them purposively.

### Meanings of Difficult Words:

- ❖ **front** (noun) – a particular situation (or) front line, vanguard, combat zone.
- ❖ **understanding** (noun) – comprehension, interpretation, grasp.
- ❖ **claim** (noun) – assertion, declaration, profession, affirmation.
- ❖ **United Nations Development Programme** (UNDP) (noun) – Founded on 22 November 1965, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) works to eradicate poverty while protecting the planet. It helps countries develop strong policies, skills, partnerships and institutions so they can sustain their progress.
- ❖ **reserve** (noun) – animal sanctuary, conservation area, protected area (for wildlife).
- ❖ **abut** (verb) – be adjacent to, adjoin, border, butt up to.
- ❖ **object** (verb) – express/raise objections; protest, oppose.
- ❖ **origins** (noun) – source, roots.
- ❖ **thus far** (phrase) – until now, till date.
- ❖ **valley** (noun) – a low area between hills or mountains typically with a river running through it.
- ❖ **pastureland** (noun) – grassy field used for cattle/livestock grazing.

- ❖ **trijunction** (noun) – a geographical point at which the boundaries of three countries or sub-national entities meet; tripoint, triple point, tri-border.
- ❖ **swap** (verb) – exchange.
- ❖ **given** (preposition) – considering, taking into account, bearing in mind.
- ❖ **secure** (verb) – get, gain, obtain something (particularly with difficulty).
- ❖ **subsequently** (adverb) – afterwards, later on, eventually.
- ❖ **embassy** (noun) – the diplomatic office building in a foreign country where the ambassador & team live and work; consulate.
- ❖ **démarche** (noun) – from French, literally means step, walk, gait (a way of walking); a course of action, initiative, move (In diplomatic relations); it is a more formal way of communication of one country's foreign affairs official to an appropriate official in another country to inform views or gather details on a given subject (or) to object/protest actions by a foreign government.
- ❖ **take a view** (phrase) – to have an opinion/idea about something.
- ❖ **sober** (adjective) – sensible, rational, thoughtful.
- ❖ **take up** (phrasal verb) – pursue, engage in (an activity or course of action).
- ❖ **put off** (phrasal verb) – postpone, delay, defer, hold off.
- ❖ **stand-off** (noun) – deadlock, stalemate, impasse (in a dispute/conflict).
- ❖ **pandemic** (noun) – the worldwide spread of a new disease; The illness spreads around the world and typically affects a large number of people across a wide area.
- ❖ **rash** (adjective) – reckless, hasty, thoughtless, careless, foolish.
- ❖ **hurry** (verb) – push, hasten, rush, urge.
- ❖ **leverage** (noun) – advantage, influence, power/authority.
- ❖ **aggression** (noun) – hostility, belligerence, combativeness, warmongering, hawkishness.
- ❖ **Line of Actual Control** (LAC) (noun) – the de-facto (effective) border between India and China. The LAC is a 4,057-km border running through three areas-Western (Ladakh, Ladakh (Kashmir)), middle (Uttarakhand, Himachal) and eastern (Sikkim, Arunachal).
- ❖ **diversionary** (adjective) – aimed to distract attention from something more important.
- ❖ **drive a wedge between** (phrase) – separate, divide.
- ❖ **double down** (phrasal verb) – to be more firm & resolute on something (decided) even if that might be a risky choice.
- ❖ **lien** (noun) – a claim or legal right against/over asset or property until the debt obligation is satisfied.
- ❖ **imply** (verb) – say indirectly, suggest, hint.
- ❖ **give up** (phrasal verb) – relinquish, renounce, forgo, abandon.
- ❖ **push** (noun) – thrust, drive, campaign, advance, offensive.
- ❖ **plateau** (noun) – an area of highland, high plain; flat terrain that is raised significantly above the surrounding area.
- ❖ **consolidate** (verb) – strengthen, make stronger, reinforce, fortify.
- ❖ **inch** (verb) – move slowly, nibble, move towards inch by inch.
- ❖ **design** (noun) – intention, aim, purpose.
- ❖ **stay the course** (idiom) – work hard till the end to accomplish the task.
- ❖ **decade** (noun) – a period of ten years.
- ❖ **purposely** (adverb) – determinedly, firmly, single-mindedly.