

Debate in Parliament



Arun Jaitley
on

Bofors
Marriage Amendment Bill
North-East students
Defence



BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY

Foreword

Speaking in Rajya Sabha on 26 April 2012 on the revelations made in Bofors case, Leader of Opposition in the House Shri Arun Jaitley said the manner in which the investigations were carried out so far shows our investigative agency in a very poor light. He said that the Congress-led UPA government should take the issue seriously as it appears that the pace of investigation depends on the colour of government in power.

While intervening in the discussion on Marriage Amendment Bill in Rajya Sabha on 30 April 2012, the Leader of Opposition in the house Shri Arun Jaitley said that while preparing the bill the Indian context and alternate argument have not been given sufficient space. He said that without according required space to the alternative viewpoint in Indian context the bill may be extremely disastrous and dangerous for Indian women once it is legislated.

The news of the murder of a Manipuri student in Bangalore and death of a Meghalaya student in Delhi has raised the question of safety and security of students from North-Eastern States coming to different parts of India for study and employment. There is an urgent need to redress the problem of students and people from North-

Eastern States who live in other parts of India so as to ensure the safety and security. Raising the issues related to North-East students on 2 May 2012, Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Shri Arun Jaitley raised many valid questions which need urgent attention.

Urging the government to lay greater emphasis on Defence preparedness along with transparency, Shri Arun Jaitley while speaking on the discussion on Defence Grant on 8 May 2012 in the House said that we need at least ₹3,00,000 crores over next ten years to get the required level of defence preparedness. His speech gives an insight into Indian security imperatives and the kind of threats posed to our country along with the level of our defence preparedness.

We are publishing these four speeches delivered by Shri Arun Jaitley in the House in the second half of the Budget session for our esteemed readers.

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The pace of investigation varies with the colour of government in power

Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I wish to raise an important issue which is of concern not only to the hon. Members of this House, but also to the entire country. The larger issue is -- I can assure my friends in the Government that I have no intention of referring to individuals - what is the capacity of our Indian State and all agencies of the State in pursuit of truth to find out where we have gone wrong? Today, we see in our neighbouring country on the western border, for somewhat similar facts, you almost had earthshaking consequences because the Government of the day did not take certain steps which would bring probity into public life. In India, we have spent 25 years trying to unearth the truth. It is a serious reflection on the health of our entire investigative process, its lack of independence that despite having got conclusive proof, we are unable to nail where the culprits are. I am more concerned really with the health of our investigative agencies than any other political factor. Obviously, we are all concerned with defence preparedness. It is of utmost importance to us that there is transparency in the procurement process. The Government, at some stage, had taken a decision, perhaps, rightly that we must eliminate middlemen so that collateral

considerations don't come in. The Government, which took this decision, needs to be complimented for that. Yet, we had, in the mid-90s during a particular purchase, somebody intervening again as middleman. Even when the disclosures were made in 1987, from 1987 till 1989, not even an FIR was registered. In 1990, some steps were taken. Then you have repeated efforts to make sure that this whole process is stalled. I was personally aghast when I came across a question even being raised before our judicial institutions: the CBI is not a lawfully constituted body which can investigate the case. Something as absurd was this and therefore efforts were made to stall this. Fortunately we had interventions of the highest judiciary and the matter proceeded.

Thereafter, you have, by that process commencing in 1990, India receiving some documents, and in 1999, a comprehensive charge sheet is filed. Sir, when the purchases were taking place, one company which had entered the whole process in October, 1985, was a company called the A.E. Services. Its contract with the Swedish supplier said, "We shall obtain for you the Indian order on or before 31st March, 1986, and only then, we are entitled to kickbacks." Obviously, this gentleman was very powerful; he could swing the contract. The contract is finally executed on 24th of March, 1986. Who this gentleman was, and the pursuit of truth went on. In 1994, the Swiss Authorities finally informed the Government of India who the recipients were. And, they found that behind this company, the recipient was a gentleman whose name begins with 'Q'. Within three days, he is allowed to escape the country. This is how the due process is defeated. Why was he so powerful that he could swing the contract? The

monies are traced; the account is traced. You don't need any further conclusive evidence. What did you do when the other Governments were in power? In 1999, a conclusive charge sheet, with entire evidence, is put in. When the United Front Government was in power, the Director, CBI, brought voluminous documents. The Government, in 1999, takes efforts in Malaysia, and the efforts to deport him didn't succeed. The Government then, after a Friday verdict, moves the Supreme Court in Malaysia on Monday only to be told that he had gone from Malaysia to Argentina. Finally, when the present Government came to power in 2004, he is found out in Argentina. The Ambassador, Mr. Rath, is told, "We don't want to pursue action against him because the action will be costly." There were a series of judicial verdicts which scuttled the whole probe. Each one is appealed against and overturned. In 2004, one probe says, "No case is made out". It is not even appealed against. And we give a whole burial to the case. This is now a sad chapter in history. Nothing more can be done. I do not know if fraud unravels everything, this will be a textbook illustration of a fraud as to how to kill the pursuit to get the truth. And, every time, some disclosure or some interview or some comment comes, it only comes in relation to the facts which are already in; most of them are in public domain. And the facts are very simple. Somebody swung the contract; somebody got the kickbacks. The details of the Swiss Accounts, which are very impossible to get, were obtained. Repeated efforts to cover up were there. And, this man, indeed, was very powerful, and then, he is allowed to escape. He jumps from one jurisdiction to another. And the Indian State looks helpless. You know the truth. You

got at it. And you are not able to capture the man. Sir, as I said, initially, my intention is not to embarrass any Government or any party or any individual. But, is it not a case that we introspect that how easy it has become for people who indulge in this kind of activities to get away? You need friendly Governments. You need investigative agencies which have become utterly non-professional. The pace of investigation varies with the political colour of the Government in power. It slows down with the colour of the Government in power. And we prided ourselves when we looked at our Western neighbour, "Look, what a great democracy we are, the largest in the world, and where are you!" And, today is the date, and there can't be a better day than this to introspect what they are doing in pursuit of a similar truth and how helpless we are looking at this. My intention, Sir, was only to draw the attention of the House to this hard reality. ■

On Marriage Amendment Bill

Bill may end up creating unusual hardship for women

Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, my colleague, Dr. Najma Heptulla, would be speaking on this Bill on behalf of my Party. But from the hon. Minister's opening statement, as also the material that he relied upon -- the Law Commission's Report and the two judgements of the Supreme Court -- I felt that in the Indian context, there is a very important alternate argument, which has not found sufficient space, and, therefore, till that alternate argument is also factored in when we legislate on this Bill, I am afraid this law may actually end up creating unusual hardships for women in India.

The Minister is right that the 1985 judgements of the Supreme Court in Chopra's case and Naveen Kohli's case and the Law Commission's Report are based really on the simple premise that elsewhere in the world also, you don't continue to flog dead marriages, and, therefore, if the marriage, for all practical purposes is dead, it is necessary that the marriage be given a burial by a decree of divorce. You cannot subsist such a marriage, so let both parties go and live in peace. To this extent, there may be a rationale

but I would urge the hon. Members, particularly, the lady members of the House, to also consider the alternative argument. Conventionally, divorce in India is granted in either of the two circumstances. Either you divorce with consent, and, consent is the basis of breaking that relationship, or, a divorce is granted to a party which is suffering from a matrimonial default caused by the other party. So, all the grounds, which the hon. Minister read just now -- cruelty, mental cruelty, physical cruelty, adultery, conversion, any form of communicable disease, desertion -- are all factors, where something intervenes, by virtue of which a person, who commits a matrimonial default, then, is the respondent who must suffer the divorce. It is the victim who is then entitled to ask for a divorce, the simple principle being that no person can take a benefit of his own default. So, if a person commits a default, he can't seek a divorce. It is only the victim who gets the divorce against the defaulting party.

Now, 'irretrievable breakdown' ground -- which he now seeks to introduce -- is different from the conventional jurisprudence of divorce. The person who causes the 'irretrievable breakdown' himself or herself is entitled to ask for a divorce. So, you may create circumstances in a matrimonial home where you say that maybe, on account of my own conduct, the circumstances are such that this marriage now cannot subsist, and, after the expiry of three years, which is the Minister's proposal, this marriage be annulled by a decree of divorce.

In countries where it is so provided, the support system then provided to the wife is extremely strong. In fact, in some of the advanced western countries, you ask for a divorce on these grounds, you will have to part with a

substantial part of your wealth. Divorces then become extremely costly. You have to share your property; you have to share your future income and make sure that the wife and the children born out of the marriage are then provided for. That is what you have to pay in order to get a divorce under these circumstances where you yourself are a defaulting party, you want to use your own default and say the marriage has now broken down and, therefore, I want a divorce. I don't think, and I regret to say this, Supreme Court can interpret the law; Supreme Court can suggest advancements to the law, but what is happening in Indian cities, towns and villages, the elected Members probably know a little better because they know what the constituents in each house are going through. Effectively, if you put irretrievable breakdown without a financial support system as a ground, the inevitable consequence is going to be - as mostly the women are the sufferers out of a matrimonial breakdown - that once a husband uses irretrievable breakdown for a divorce, courts give conventional and very conservative maintenance amounts. The wife goes back to her parent's house in every village and every small town. She is dependent on her brothers, on her parents, if they are alive. She does not get the kind of property sharing which people in Europe and United States are getting. Therefore, she becomes permanently dependent on them. The manner in which this Bill has been drafted, neither the Law Commission nor both judgements of the Supreme Court have considered what will be the plight of women after divorce is granted on an irretrievable breakdown. It is different from other matrimonial offences. If a lady is guilty of cruelty or desertion or adultery, then obviously the husband will get a divorce on

the grounds of a matrimonial offence. If it is by mutual consent, they will probably come to a financial arrangement. But what happens on an irretrievable breakdown where on account of husband's own conduct the marriage is broken down, he uses his own default to get a divorce and she now becomes permanently dependent on her parents or her brothers or others? All that the law says is, and I am quite distressed to read the language of this law, the court will not grant a divorce where the wife is the respondent. The language is 'till the court is satisfied that arrangements have been made to its satisfaction to eliminate hardship'. Elsewhere in the world, where this jurisprudence exists, the wife will get the same standard of living after divorce which she was getting when she was living with her husband. And the test we are applying is that after she is thrown out and after the marriage is dead, since the dead marriage can't be flogged, she goes out and all we will provide to her is 'we will eliminate her hardship'. If we start with such a legislative policy, I think, we will be doing a great injustice to the women. We must, therefore, seriously consider that without provisions like residence, without provisions like sharing of assets, without provisions for an adequate compensation, whether in the abstract we can say, 'well, the western countries have it; our Supreme Court is also saying so, therefore, let us also have it as a ground'. I think, therefore, before we start the discussion on this, I just wanted to bring the alternative viewpoint that this provision has a potential for being extremely disastrous and dangerous for Indian women once it is legislated. ■

On North-East students

Government must look into the matters of North-Eastern student very seriously

Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, the hon. Finance Minister, I am sorry, the hon. Home Minister has mentioned the three recent incidents which have recently increased the uneasiness and caused a lot of disquiet in the entire country. Two young lives of students from the NorthEast, in Manesar, near Gurgaon, and in Bengaluru, were recently lost, and at the time of the BRICS Summit, a very large number of North-Eastern students studying in Delhi, as also employed in Delhi, had a serious grievance that they were being profiled and picked up even temporarily by the Police.

Sir, the Partition of this country in 1947, when we discuss it, certainly brought a lot of bloodshed in the Western region. Punjab suffered, other areas suffered. But North-East suffered virtually in perpetuity. Because of the carving out of East Pakistan, which later became Bangladesh, it moved away almost a thousand kilometres in terms of distance. Now, the impact of this was that the developmental activities in the North-East have considerably suffered. Despite the efforts of various

Governments, North-East has not grown in the same manner in which the rest of the country has. North-East also has a genuine complaint that certain Central Schemes and projects are endeavoured to assist them and various things have not really lived up to the mark.

My recent visit to some areas of North-East found that most of the States still do not have train service. Even in Assam where the facility is available, what we used to hear in the fifties' and sixties' in other parts of the country, the big issue is conversion of meter gauge into broad gauge, particularly to the Barak Valley. We have a highway project going on successfully in the rest of the country. The *Mahasadak Yojana* which was to really extend beyond West Bengal into the NorthEast, you can still see only built in patches and not usable. All this has considerably suffered. The educational infrastructure in the North-East has also suffered. I have been going through certain reports of studies which have been conducted with regard to educational institutions which we have established in the NorthEast. Now one of the comments if I just read out, just the broad points, in which they have said syllabus has not been updated for more than ten years, number of new courses have not been added, institute-industry interaction is not taking place, flight of faculty is taking place and adequate faculty is not available, quality and quantity of qualified faculty is declining at an alarming rate, number of PhD holders have been reduced to minority in many cases, placement of students with industry becomes a weak thing. Now, all these factors have, therefore, contributed to really a large number of North Eastern students wanting to go to other parts of the country for education. Now while the reason for this is unfortunate but there is a sliver

lining in this. Their interaction with the rest of the country contributes to national integration and it helps us really in understanding what their problems are. Sir, I remember when I was a student, the organization to which I belong used to carry on a programme in relation to North Eastern students experiences at inter-State level. Some of them used to come, their structured tours used to be organized, not many were coming here to study at that time, they used to live here with families for a few days and we got to understand them. Now a situation is that we see it in the larger context and now we have dealt with hundreds and thousands of them. In fact, one recent study indicated that between 2005 and 2010, the number of people migrating for jobs from the North-East went up about 12 times. That was the figure. It was about 34,000 in 2005, and in 2010, it was 4,14,850. That is the pace at which it is increasing. The sliver lining in this is, and if we see these students extremely charming personalities, polite, humble, very eager to interact with the rest of the people, they have to be made to feel wanted in the rest of the society. They have left a great impact in educational institutions to which they belong. But, at the same time, most of them want to have the benefit of higher education institutions of quality in other parts of the country.

They want their educational profile and personalities to evolve and then they want to be a part of this great growth story which we talk about in the rest of the country. We have to admit and it is a genuine admission which everybody has to make that the growth in those regions has not been at the pace at which we would have expected it to be. Therefore, in search of education, in search of better quality employment, they have moved to different parts

of the country. Therefore, I must note that I find a line in the hon. Home Minister's statement, when he says, "I wish to categorically state that any citizen belonging to the North-Eastern States is free to travel and reside in any part of the country. They have a right to security and peace.' They also have a right to live free from any form of discrimination from any form of racial profiling. They have the rights to enjoy the fruits of development which in several other parts of the country people have now begun to enjoy, though to a limited extent. Under these circumstances, Sir, we need to assure all students and other citizens who have come from the North-East either in search of education or in search of jobs in this part of the country, that not only their safety and security is going to be maintained, even there is a lot that we have to learn from them.

Most of them are multi-lingual; they are multi-religious; they belong to different religious denominations. Therefore, we have a lot to learn from them. In this context, therefore, I would like the hon. Home Minister to consider, in addition to the steps that he has already taken, whether in these areas, where larger number of students are available whether in the Union Territories or in the States, a specific helpline for them can be created. We have data of surveys and studies done on the students of the North-East. One recent study says that 86 per cent of them have complaint, of some form or the other, of harassment. If the figure is as large as this, this is certainly alarming. This is an eye-opener. Therefore, must we not have a specific helpline in these major areas where these students are studying or these people are working? It is not a very costly exercise. I

think, any State Government, if properly advised, will be quiet willing to do it. The Union Territories also can do it. I also think there is a need to sensitize the rest of the Indian society. When students from Jammu & Kashmir, from the North-Eastern States come and study here, or people come and work here, I think, it is extremely important for a larger national goal that their integration with the Indian society is further strengthened by virtue of the attitude of the society has for them. Therefore, within universities, within workplaces and within the society, and, I think, media, particularly electronic media, will have a huge role to play. We have carried out campaigns how tourists have to be treated.

We have carried out campaigns how weaker sections of the society are to be treated. We have carried out campaigns how women are to be treated in the society. Therefore, in relation to this, I think, we need to carry out a campaign in India so that we can sensitize our own people on how, in such events, people who come from the North-East to study or work in these places, are to be treated. Finally, I would like to request the Government, through the hon. Home Minister that the areas where very obvious developmental activities, which have contributed to the neglect of the North-East, are pending - their roads, their railways, their connectivity, improvement in their educational institutions, etc. - the Government must, through the DONER, look into these matters very seriously. There are some areas which will take time, but there are some areas which are very easily doable. I think, top priority must be given to those areas. ■

On Defence

Put greater emphasis on defence preparedness

Mr. Chairman, Sir, we just celebrated the life of a legend. Sir, this is in the context of what I believe is our increased security vulnerability. The hon. *Raksha Mantri* is here and the defence and 'raksha' of this country is his primary concern and his job. To analyse these security vulnerabilities of the country, the geo-strategic realities of India have to be re-assessed. Our defence preparedness today must be integral to these changed realities. We had wars in 1949, 1965, 1971 and, then, we had Kargil and we had the war with Pakistan; and in 1962, with China. I think post Kargil, post 9/11 and, particularly, in the last six years in relation to India, our defence preparedness must be assessed in terms of the changing geo-strategic realities.

Those were wars with individual nations. In the last few years, we have seen an emerging access between China and Pakistan. In PoK, in Northern areas, the Chinese troops are today physically present. China has repeatedly, from a position of neutrality, altered its position with regard to Jammu & Kashmir. Stapled visa to our citizens who come from Jammu & Kashmir was one indicator of this changed position. 'Denial of visa to our Northern Army Commander' was a reassessed and restated position by China. Today, at least, two nuclear reactors in Pakistan are

being built with Chinese assistance. This is a changed reality which was not there ten years ago. The second changed reality is, Pakistan has considerably enhanced its own nuclear capability. It is today the fifth largest possessor of nuclear arsenal in the world. The tactical weapons that it is developing indicate a paradigm shift in its own defence strategy. Members have already emphasized that China's Defence Budget is several times more than ours. It has modernized its Forces, it has acquired huge Space capabilities, it has the ability for a cyber war offensive; its DF-21 Missiles; its aircraft carriers; its productions of J 11 Aircraft -- these are all adding to the Chinese capability. On the Line of Actual Control, what are the Chinese activities? They built roads; they built airbases; and they have strategically positioned their troops. With several of their neighbours, China has settled its border disputes. But with regard to India, even though a Joint Mechanism was set up in 2003, the position is not always static; it keeps changing. And, in the last nine years, we have not been able to - despite a great effort by the Indian Government - settle the boundary dispute with China. There is a go-slow approach. There is a realization in China that 'we have arrived as an important world force and if these issues remain pending, maybe, ten years down, the balance of power in our favour will be far more'. They referred to Arunachal Pradesh in their internal communication as 'South China.' How much of Arunachal is a disputed territory according to them, the position keeps varying. If our Minister or an Army General visits Tawang, there is a dispute which is raised, even on the question of visit. Sir, a key issue on which the Government Ministers and spokesmen have also been rightly saying, 'we did live with a disturbed Western neighbour', is: how do we achieve

peace with Pakistan? It is a hard reality that boundaries are never going to be redrawn again. It is a reality which Pakistan has to eventually realize; they do not accept it. A lot will depend not on the Americans, not on us, but will depend on the internal developments in Pakistan. If Pakistan becomes a more moderate State, a more democratic State, if a Civilian Government gains strength in Pakistan and these regional realities are also accepted by them, then, perhaps, we will have a situation where a meaningful dialogue is possible.

But, if you have a more radicalized Pakistan, a Pakistan where terrorism continues to be an instrument of State policy, where the Army is in control and the civilian regimes are merely a showpiece, where there is a danger of nuclear potential and assets getting into rogue hands, then, we can only continue a dialogue without a certainty as to what the success of that dialogue is going to be. I have said this, Sir, because this is the geo-strategic reality as far as India is concerned, and the situation in the last one decade in this regard has substantially changed. We must recognize this reality, and our defence preparedness, therefore, has to match this reality.

Sir, I was going through some data from war historians, and I came across some figures which were a surprise even to me. At the time of the First World War, we were a small nation. Our population was a miniscule of the present population. At that time, we had 1.3 million Indian soldiers who fought the First World War. So, even in 1914 that was the strength of our Armed Forces. In the Second World War it was 2.58 million, that is, more than 25 lakh soldiers from India fought in the War. It could have been a part of the British strategy to use Indian manpower as their military. So, more than 25 lakh Indian soldiers fought the

Second World War. At the time of Partition, we had 16 ordnance factories. So, the railways and the armed forces were all a part of the British strategy where in the colonies that they controlled they wanted to have these in sufficient numbers. Fortunately, all 16 ordnance factories, after Partition, came to India, and at that time, we had a mistaken notion of our own strength and we had, perhaps, an innocent assessment of what our strategic situation is. In 1956, when the demands-for-grants of the Budget were being debated upon and the Defence Ministry was being debated upon in the other House, this was what the then Prime Minister, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, had to say. I read this because this is important. The year was 1956. The China War was in 1962. We had allowed ourselves to be misled. Panditji said, and I quote: "The right approach to defence is to avoid any unfriendly relations with other countries. Some hon. Members in this House who talked in rather aggressive terms for neighbouring countries and want to take grave action, sword in hands, serve no cause, certainly not the cause of this country. It is one thing for us to be perfectly prepared because however peaceful our policy may be, no Government can take the risk of an emergency arising which it cannot face, but any kind of blustering attitude neither is becoming of a dignified nation, nor is it safe." Then, he went on to add, "Then we come to the second aspect. The real strength of a country develops by industrial growth, which implies the capacity to make weapons of war for the Army, Navy or the Air Force." So, we thought, if we are peaceful, let us industrialize; we will have the potential to develop our own weaponry; why should anybody else attack us? And the result of this was the great Himalayan blunder of 1962. In that Himalayan blunder, we lost 1383 soldiers, 1696 went missing, and 3698 were

captured. We were caught napping. Sir, an American journalist, Edward Murrow, asked the then Prime Minister whether he regarded China as a friend. Panditji said, "Not at all. And practically looking at the picture, I do not regard any country as a threat to India."

Sir, we do not want to repeat the same mistake and, therefore, in terms of these changing geo-strategic realities, our defence strategy has to be planned...particularly when you find Chinese troops present in PoK and in other areas, the kind of military cooperation between the two countries which is going on, the kind of road building across our border which is going on. We have 15,000 kms of international border and a large part of this border is with countries with whom we have security issues. These are realities which we will have to bear in mind. Therefore, our strategic policy is: What should be our defence preparedness? A full spectrum war today will not be an infantry or an artillery war. We hope there is none. I am almost sure there will be none. But our preparedness has to be at that level. And a 90-days full spectrum war is what military experts consider that our country must be always prepared for. If you are to be prepared for that, you have to assess your defence preparedness keeping these factors in mind. And your defence strategy has to be, if ever there is such a calamity how do we defeat Pakistan, how do we hold China. That is the realistic reality. Do we have a defence preparedness that we are in a position to do so? There was a time when we considered our defence superiority over Pakistan to be 3.5 against 1. Today it has narrowed down to 1.5 against 1. Therefore, we really have to consider as to how do we keep ourselves prepared; while our foreign policy must ensure our best friendly relationship with our neighbours;

we must always be in a dialogue to resolve our boundary and other contentious issues. But we can't repeat the mistake which historically we had it. What is one of the biggest problems that we face? Members have repeatedly said that. My colleague, Mr. Punj, very effectively said that. For 70 per cent of our defence armament, we are dependent on international sources. If 70 per cent of our defence armament comes from abroad, what happens in the case of hostilities? The entire world community, and understandably so, will be interested in a ceasefire or in a peace. And when the entire world community will be pressurizing peace, your supplies can be held at ransom. If your supplies, your spare-parts or ammunition are held at ransom, is that your level of defence preparedness? So, clear defence strategy has to be, over the next one decade or one-and-a-half decades, how does India become, at least, 70 per cent self-reliant. And if you have to become 70 per cent self-reliant, I am told by all defence experts, then in the composition of any country's defence equipment, at least 30 per cent of it has to be extremely modern and state-of-the-art, 40 per cent has to be the current technologies and outdated or outgoing can be the remaining 30 per cent. We can't have mostly equipment which are outdated. We have to target a state-of-the-art technology in each of these equipment. Now look at where we stand. I don't want to even sound partisan; I won't be. If there are allegations on the purchase of Tatra trucks, I am sure the investigations, which the hon. Minister has referred to, will take care of it.

I am on a more important issue. We claim to be a world power. We want to join the high table in the elite club. We launch our own satellites. We pride ourselves for Prithvi and Agni. And we can't manufacture our own Army trucks!

For trucks, which have to drive on difficult terrain and which have to carry heavy armament, for how many years have we decided that we must rely on imported trucks? Now manufacturing trucks is not a rocket science. Trucks like any other automobile -- it may be a little more advanced technology - is normal technology. In one of the world's largest economies claiming to be a future world power, even for trucks we have to depend on others. The issue is not whether there was corruption in the purchase of Tatra trucks or others. According to me, that is a secondary issue. The first issue is, and this holds true for several Governments of several colours, and we all have to put our heads together and decide and really think on this question as to why even trucks must be imported. Are we in such a pathetic and helpless situation that we can't manufacture our own trucks? That is the real cause of worry. On China border, if Chinese are building roads, if Chinese are having airbases, in the event of any hostilities, our equipment and men will take weeks to reach there. Why can't they reach within time? Why is the capacity to build roads, set up airbases not being achieved there? Is it because we don't have an adequate budget for it? Again, building roads and airbases, which is very vital to any Army infrastructure, is not, to repeat the same phrase, 'rocket science'. The Chinese are doing so. We have not been able to do so. And, this brings me to a cause which a lot of Members have really expressed here. Where is it that we are lagging? If you look at the artillery guns of the Army, the last major purchase was done in 1986 - the 155 MM Howitzer. They served us during the Kargil War. And, certainly from 1986 till today, you would have had more modern technologies. Then, you have tanks - T-55, T-90. Seventy per cent of our tank fleet is night blinded, and

wars continue 24 hours a day. It was only in the ancient mythology that when the sun used to set, the war used to stop. This does not happen any more. You can't have a night-blinded armoury of tanks and then wonder that why is it that we are crippled. Our air defence artillery, the L-70 guns, is becoming old. In the Army Chief's letter to the hon. Prime Minister, it is this air defence that he refers to as 90 per cent obsolete. Our Indian Navy needs, at least, 3 aircraft carriers; we have only one. Vikramaditya has been delayed for over four years.

Experts believe that in the Navy, we need 30 submarines; we have only eight. You need 45 integral fighter aircrafts, 17 reconnaissance aircrafts. Now, these are all areas where we are still lagging behind. China has announced that by 2020, they will have 2,300 combat aircrafts. By that date, we are planning 700. Our MiGs really have to be more modernised. The accidents there are cause for worry. For all this, the Defence Minister will have to start planning today. The best strategy for Defence is preparedness. It is not merely a hope that nothing ever will happen because now, if something happens, it will no longer be a conventional war. There will be access of nations; there will be cyber attacks; there will be a war of different dimension. How do we deal with this situation? Sir, we all, in one voice, compliment the Defence Minister. He is a very honourable man. I think, he is conscious of the fact that there must be transparency. But, I urge him that along with transparency, please give, if not equal, a somewhat higher emphasis on preparedness. He said the other day in the House that even if he got an anonymous letter, he would stop the transaction. Please, don't do that. It's good to be honest, but it is very bad to become a prisoner of your own image. And, if you do that,

the security of the country will suffer.

And, therefore, we cannot afford under any circumstances these delays. Coming to the controversies over the years, I am conscious of the fact, and I share his difficulty, whether it was Bofors, whether it was HDW submarine, whether it was Tehelka, whether it was several CAG reports, these controversies have put the entire system on the backfoot. People have become defensive. People want to shrug responsibility rather than take it, and, therefore, it is extremely important that you exhibit and exercise the kind of leadership that is expected from a *Raksha Mantri*. Get back the confidence into the system that as long as men are honest, transactions are in broad national interest, you will stand by every officer who takes that decision. We cannot allow files to linger on for years and years together. If we start planning now, we need, at least, 3,00,000 crores of rupees over the next ten years to really get to that level of defence preparedness, and, it is that defence preparedness which is of primary concern to this country. Sir, I said so because we trust you for the security of the nation. It is a great trust which the nation puts in the Defence Ministry and in the Armed Forces. We all need to stand behind them. We need to really disassociate them from needless controversies, and, we need that level of defence preparedness, and, I think, this House must be one, most Members have given a similar sentiment, so that our level of defence preparedness could really increase in terms of these changing realities around this country.

