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THE WEEK

WOMEN IN THE ARMY
CAN THEY EXCEL IN
COMBAT ROLES?



INDIA-UAE RELATIONS: CONQUERING NEW PEAKS

**EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW**

REEM AL-HASHIMY
UAE MINISTER OF STATE
FOR INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION



COMMANDING CHANGE

A leaked letter reignites the debate on women officers

BY SANJIB KR BARUAH

MULA GABHARU IS a name largely unknown in mainland India. But in the vast Brahmaputra plains of Assam, she is a revered 16th-century warrior princess. Enraged by the treacherous death of her husband, a military general, at the hands of Turbak Khan, a famed Turkish general in the army of Sultan Nasrat Shah of Bengal, Mula took up arms. Donning her husband's battle attire, she mounted her war elephant, Nangjing, and breathed new life into a dispirited Ahom force. She slew King Turbak and led the Ahoms to victory over the Bharali river in Assam, driving the invaders back to the western border of the kingdom.

The legend of Mula Gabharu, and many others like her, exemplifies the capabilities of women military leaders. Throughout Indian history, countless women warriors have commanded men and wielded swords with exceptional skill.

BREAKING BARRIERS

Army officers in a high-altitude location on the northern border

Yet, traditional bias against women warriors persists. What if, for instance, instead of the Indian Air Force's Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, it had been a female pilot whose MiG-21 Bison fighter was downed in Pakistani territory in February 2019? Would India have responded differently to Pakistanis' capturing her? Would it have escalated to an all-out war?

How do women leaders navigate the male-dominated military, where patriarchy prevails and the "male-bonding" and "band of brothers" ethos is deeply ingrained? It is an environment where brute strength often trumps skill, and where, historically, the presence of women has been seen as a distraction.

Despite these challenges, women have fought on the front lines throughout history. However, a recent "DO" (a demi official letter, a type of written communication between officers allowing for a personal touch) has reignited the debate surrounding the role of women in the armed forces. The letter, dated October 1 and penned by Lieutenant General Rajeev Puri, general officer commanding of the Mountain Strike Corps in Panagarh, West Bengal, to Lieutenant General Ram Chander Tiwari, head of the Army's Mountain Strike Command, called for a detailed performance analysis of female commanding officers under his command.

Puri's letter, which quickly went

INDIAN ARMY

राज्य दर्पण

कश्मीर: खेल खत्म, पैसा हजम पेज 16

मध्य प्रदेश: विजली की निगरानी पेज 18



भुवनेश्वर 2.0 प्लान और इसके एक मॉडल की तस्वीर (ऊपर)



► ओडिशा

भुवनेश्वर 2.0

अगर कामयाब रहा तो भुवनेश्वर 2.0 दूसरे भारतीय शहरों के लिए मॉडल बन सकता है
आर्कमय दत्ता मजूमदार

जब भी भारत के आधुनिक शहरी नियोजन की बात होती है, तो सबसे ज्यादा कसीदे कार्बूजिए के शहर चंडीगढ़ के पढ़े जाते हैं। मगर जब आधुनिक भुवनेश्वर का निर्माण हुआ तब चंडीगढ़ निराकार विचार भर था। 1948 में ओडिशा की राजधानी जर्मन वास्तुकार ओटो कोनिग्सबर्गर के चौड़े रास्तों, बगीचों और पार्कों से भरे शहर में बदल चुकी थी। लेकिन

आठ दशकों के बेतरतीब विकास ने हमेशा की तरह सब चौपट कर दिया। लिहाजा पुराने शहर के बाहरी छोर पर भुवनेश्वर 2.0 का मंसूबा बनाया जा रहा है, और यह ऐसी परियोजना है जो बाकी भारत के लिए मॉडल बन सकती है, बशर्ते सरकारी मंसूबों की मानें, यानी असहमत आवाजों को नजरअंदाज कर दें।

तो औपचारिक खाका क्या है? इरादा तो बढ़िया है। 324 हेक्टेयर से ज्यादा में बन रहे नए शहर में महज इमारतें और सड़कें नहीं

होंगी। इसका मकसद नवाचार, पारिस्थितिकी और समावेश का सही किस्म का 'स्मार्ट' मेल तैयार करना है। इस तरह कि इसमें प्रकृति और आधुनिकता का संतुलन हो, जहां 18 2.05 हेक्टेयर जमीन विकास योग्य होगी और चारों तरफ 48.18 हेक्टेयर सीमित विकास क्षेत्र और 92.30 हेक्टेयर रिजर्व फॉरेस्ट होगा, एक 'जन मार्ग' (पीपुल्स स्ट्रीट) की कल्पना कीजिए, जिसमें यहां-वहां कैफे, बीच में हरे-भरे नजारे, छायादार लेन में साइकिल चलाते