To hell with logic! Just carry on

Different sets of rules govern different sets of people. But there are no rules for the people who govern the masses. ■ by Wg Cdr (Retd.) D.P. Sabharwal

He joined the Indian Army after going through a really tough selection and enrollment process. After completing the rigorous training, he was posted to a battalion where he went through all the written and unwritten rules regarding the discharge of duties. He also learnt the supreme lesson of sacrifice: Not to ever flinch to lay down one's life when the moment comes to protect the motherland and the *izzat* (honour) of the battalion.

As the saying goes in the Army, he was lucky to be drawn into battle and was called upon to take part in a live action. It was during this course of duty, when risking his life, he got close to the place where the militants were hiding in a deserted house and then shot them down, in the troubled State of Jammu and Kashmir. For his dare-devil act of bravery, in which he could easily have lost his life, he was awarded the prestigious 'Sena Medal' for gallantry.

The significance of this award can be gauged from two facts: 1) Only about 50 or so out of an estimated 12 lakh strong army-men receive a Sena Medal on Republic Day. 2) The recipient is entitled to Rs 1,000 pm stipend for life.

The army man under reference was discharged from service after about 8 years of active service on compassionate grounds. After sorting out the problems at home, for which he had sought discharge from the Army, he applied for a job that included reservations for Ex-Servicemen, in respect of relaxation in upper age-limit. His application was, however, rejected on the grounds that 'he did not qualify as an Ex-Serviceman!'

'What?' You are likely to exclaim, as I did, when I read the news-report.

The fact of the matter is, that he served in the Army for 8 long years; so he is a Serviceman; no doubt there. And since he had been discharged from the Army, he becomes an Ex-Serviceman. You are right; that is the logic. But no, you are not on the right side of the rules – which might be wrong but are considered right!

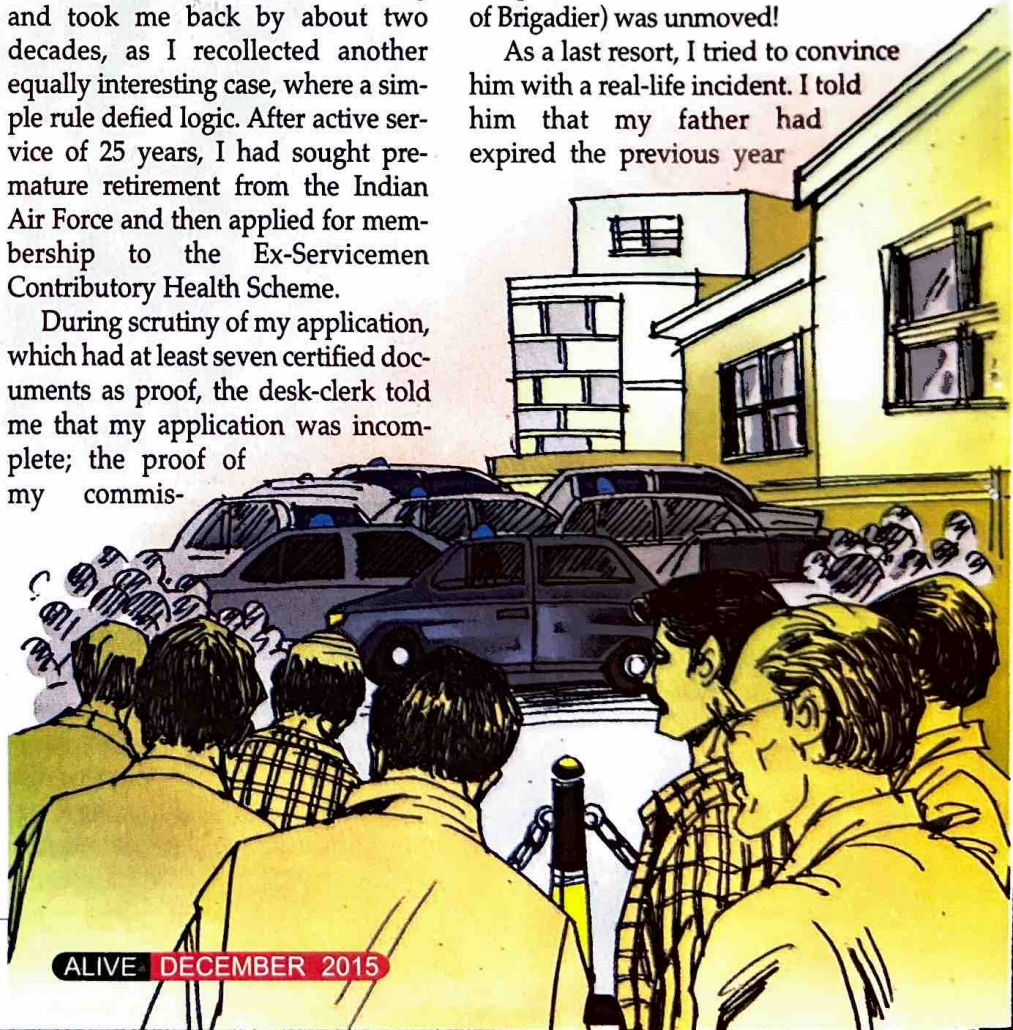
Another interesting case

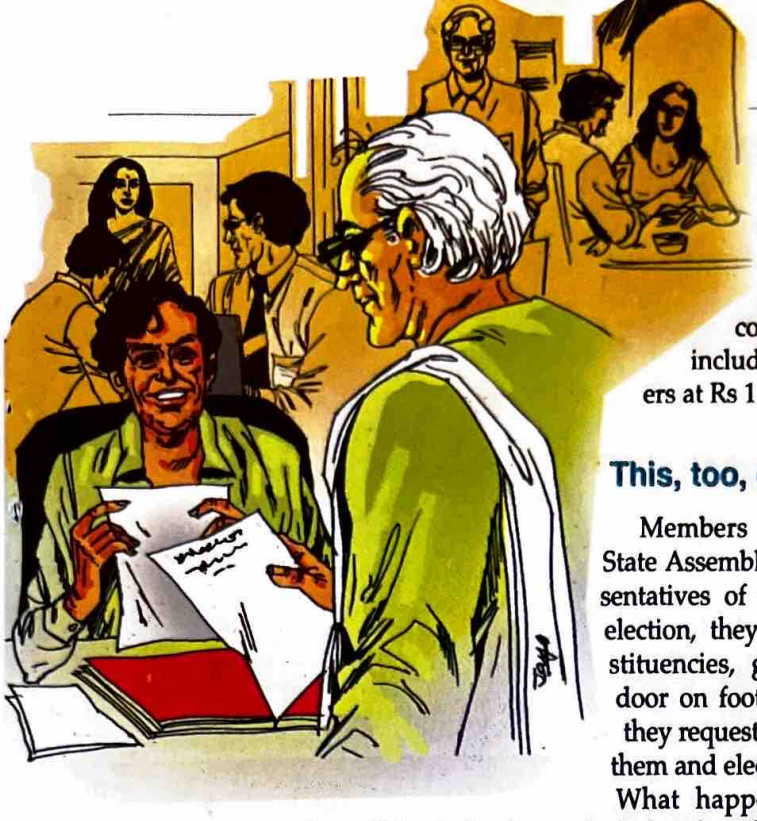
The news-item set me thinking and took me back by about two decades, as I recollected another equally interesting case, where a simple rule defied logic. After active service of 25 years, I had sought premature retirement from the Indian Air Force and then applied for membership to the Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme.

During scrutiny of my application, which had at least seven certified documents as proof, the desk-clerk told me that my application was incomplete; the proof of my commissioning was not attached. I informed him that I was not in possession of any such certificate and my discharge certificate, on the basis of which I was drawing monthly pension, was proof that I was a commissioned officer. This was not acceptable to him and he asked me to contact his superior.

I went to the next desk and the next-to-next as well, but the demand was the same: Attach the proof that I was commissioned as an officer. Finally, I went to the top boss, thereby literally completing what I had heard so far but never experienced; going from pillar-to-post. I explained my position, but the 'post' (the senior officer of the rank of Brigadier) was unmoved!

As a last resort, I tried to convince him with a real-life incident. I told him that my father had expired the previous year





and, for various formalities in banks and transfer of property, only his death certificate was required. No one had demanded his birth-certificate since his death was proof that he had been born! The anecdote did two things: It brought a smile on his otherwise stiff and sullen face and he did appreciate the logic.

Trying to strike the iron when it was hot, I requested him to forward the application with suitable comments on the basis of my logic. But no; he would not do anything contrary to the so-called rule; right or wrong! He remained steadfast in the necessity of attaching the proof of commissioning. To my good luck, I had preserved the parchment that the President of India had issued on my commissioning, which served as the necessary proof.

There is yet another case, where logic got brazenly dumped. It was reported by the a national daily, that Chennai Super King (CSK) franchise was transferred from Indian Cements to Chennai Super Kings Limited and the valuation was a mere Rs 5 lakh – cheaper than a small car. This was apparently done to avoid paying 5% of the valuation money to the Board of Control for Cricket in India.

How this valuation was done defies all logic in the face of a simple fact. A notable aspect of the franchise was, that buying and retaining 23 players at IPL-2015 auction cost Rs 21 crore, which included buying two players at Rs 1.5 crore each.

This, too, defies all logic

Members of Lok Sabha and State Assemblies are elected representatives of the people. Prior to election, they move in their constituencies, going from door-to-door on foot. With folded hands they request the voters to vote for them and elect them.

What happens when they get elected and are lucky to become ministers? The same 'elected representatives' start travelling in a convoy of cars, varying in numbers from 5 - 25. All the cars are almost identical so that it is not possible to make out which car the minister is travelling in. In addition, the traffic is stopped some 20 - 30 metres away. If, by mistake or by chance, some individual citizen gets closer, he is showered with blows of *lathis* by the ever-vigilant cops!

Have you ever thought as to why this happens? Well, the only logical answer that can be drawn is that the ministers or their cronies think that someone is going to attack them. They probably feel that they are so unpopular that people might kill them. Hence, the camouflage and the isolation from the public, whose servants (supposedly) they are!

The basic question as to why should someone attack them or try to kill them is never looked at. Their behaviour defies all logic.

The famous 'fodder scam' of Bihar was exposed in 1996. It involved the embezzlement of about Rs 9.4 billion from the Government treasury of Bihar. This was the first case in Indian history where the incumbent Chief Minister were implicated and arrested and it exposed the extensive nexus between the bureaucrats, elected politicians and business people.

The master stroke

The famous 'fodder scam' of Bihar was exposed in 1996. It involved the embezzlement of about Rs 9.4 billion from the Government treasury of Bihar. This was the first case in Indian history where the incumbent Chief Minister were implicated and arrested and it exposed the extensive nexus between the bureaucrats, elected politicians and business people. As the scandal erupted and there was pressure for the Chief Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav – from outside as well as his own party, Janata Dal – to resign, he came out with two master-strokes.

First, he parted ways with the Janata Dal and floated his own party, the Rashtriya Janata Dal, taking with him virtually all the Janata Dal legislators. He could, thus, win the vote of confidence and continued as Chief Minister.

As the pressure kept mounting, he had to resign within 20 days. However, the same day, he installed his wife Rabri Devi as the new Chief Minister.

The appointment of Rabri Devi as the Chief Minister of Bihar came under severe satirical criticism and stiff opposition and defied all logic. She was a typical housewife, who had given birth to nine children; she was illiterate and, till then, had no experience whatsoever in politics. How she could be put in the Chief Minister's chair defied reason!

Another aspect that defied logic in this particular instance was, that the main national party, the Congress, supported her in winning the vote of confidence. Installing her in that post was a clear signal to the people of Bihar and the country that 'governance and better administration' is not at all the priority for the politicians.

All this points to just one thing: To hell with logic. Just carry on. ■