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NEW TOP GUNS

Lt Gen Bipin Rawat, Air Marshal BS Dhanoa will take charge on December 31, whereas IB and RAW chiefs will assume office on January 1

RAWAT A TOUGH FIGHTER

- Lt Gen Bipin Rawat joined the Indian Army in December 1978
- He was commissioned into the 5/11 Gorkha Rifles
- He is second consecutive chief from the Gorkha Rifles
- General Rawat's father was also a Lieutenant General
- Rawat was commanding the Pune-based Southern Command before he was appointed army vice-chief
- Rawat miraculously survived a chopper accident when he was commander of the Dimapur-based Headquarters 3 Corps
- He headed the Indian brigade during the UN peacekeeping operation in Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2008



- The general is credited with providing dynamic leadership under the UN banner
- Indian peacekeepers switched approach under his command

DHANOA'S ACTION-PACKED CAREER

- Air Marshal BS Dhanoa joined the Indian Air Force (IAF) as a fighter pilot in June 1978
- His father, SS Dhanoa, was the chief secretary of Punjab
- Dhanoa saw action during the Kargil war and was awarded the Yudh Seva Medal
- He is currently the IAF's vice-chief and before that was heading the South-Western Air Command
- He will be the third Sikh to head the IAF after distinguished military leaders Arjan Singh and Dilbag Singh



NEW IB CHIEF A SEASONED HAND

- Rajiv Jain, a 1980-batch officer, joined the IB in 1989 as assistant director
- Jharkhand-cadre officer, Jain is the senior-most special director in the IB
- He is the domestic intelligence wing's pointsman for other agencies in the government's demonetisation exercise
- Jain handled assignments as chief of Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau (SIB)
- Headed the Ahmedabad SIB between 2005 and 2008, and later in Delhi from 2008 to 2012
- Jain, who is at present serving as the Special Director in the IB, will take over on January 1 after the incumbent Dineshwar Sharma completes his two-year tenure on December 31
- He was adviser to the previous NDA government's interlocutor on Kashmir K C Pant when talks were held with separatist leaders like Shabbir Shah

R&AW CHIEF A PAKISTAN EXPERT

- Anil Kumar Dhasmana joined the R&AW in 1993
- He is known to be a Pakistan expert
- Dhasmana is a 1981-batch IPS officer

Sun, 18 Dec, 2016

Bipin Rawat Jumps Queue to Be Army Chief

In a move likely to trigger a major controversy, the Government on Saturday did away with the criteria of appointing the senior-most officer as the Army chief and selected Lt General Bipin Rawat to head the Army. Rawat, who is serving as Vice-Chief of Army, superseded the senior most officer Lt General Praveen Bakshi and second senior most officer Lt General PM Hariz. An infantry officer, Rawat will take over as the new chief after Army Chief General Dalbir Singh Suhag retires on December 31.

It is the second time in three-and-half-decade that the Government has ignored the seniority yardstick while appointing the Army chief. The last time such an unprecedented step was taken in 1983 when then senior-most officer Lt General SK Sinha, then serving as Vice-Chief of Army, was superseded and his junior Lt General A Vaidya was made the chief in 1983.

Sinha had resigned in protest. However, in case of appointment of chief of the Indian Air force, the Government went by seniority and selected Air Marshal BS Dhanoa as the new chief. He is now serving as Vice-Chief of IAF and will take charge as chief after incumbent Air Chief Marshal Arup Raha retires on December 31. As per convention, the names of the incoming chiefs are announced at least two months prior to the retirement of the incumbent. However, the current political dispensation chose to make public the names just days prior to the retirement of the present heads. In fact, the name of Navy chief Admiral Sunil Lanba was also announced just 20 days before the incumbent Admiral RK Dhowan was to retire on May 31 this year.

The Government will have to specify the reasons for ignoring the seniority issue while selecting Rawat as it will now lead to upsetting the entire chain of succession.

However, sources said Bakshi, an armoured corps officer and now in charge of the Eastern Command, may become Permanent Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee. This post will be a new creation and the four-star General will act as single-point military advisor to the political leadership on matters of national security. A committee headed by then Home Minister L k Advani had recommended setting up of such a post in 2000. This committee was asked to look into issues of higher defence management in the wake of Kargil war in 1999. Following its recommendations some new institutions like Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) and Andaman and Nicobar Tri-Services Command were set up.



Sun, 18 Dec, 2016

Mohali link of new Air Chief

The next Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa, has his roots in Mohali. He was born in Gharuan village, adjoining Chandigarh's satellite township, on September 7, 1957.

Air Marshal Dhanoa's father, Sarayan Singh, was the Punjab Chief Secretary during the 1980s and later served as adviser to the state Governor, while his sister is residing in Chandigarh. His grandfather, Capt Sant Singh, had served with the erstwhile British Indian Army.

According to locals, the Air Marshal's family had a house and some land in the village, but had disposed it of. He had last visited the village in September 2014 to attend a "bhog" ceremony.

Gharuan is a village of about 10,000 inhabitants and while residents are by and large unaware about Air Marshal Dhanoa, a few still remember the legacy of Capt Sant Singh. Some of Air Marshal Dhanoa's relatives

still reside there. Air Marshal Dhanoa is an alumnus of the Rashtriya Indian Military College and the National Defence Academy.



Sun, 18 Dec, 2016

Rajiv Jain Is IB Head, Anil Dhasmana to Lead Raw

The Government on Saturday made two key appointments to head country's vital security establishments — Intelligence Bureau (IB) and Research and Analysis Wing (RAW).

Jharkhand cadre IPS officer Rajiv Jain has been appointed the new IB chief, while Anil Dhasmana will head external intelligence agency RAW. Both the officers will have tenure of two years.

Jain is currently serving as the Special Director in the IB. He will take over on January 1 after the incumbent Dineshwar Sharma completes his two-year tenure on December 31. A recipient of President's Police Medal, the 1980-batch officer has served in various departments of the IB, including the sensitive Kashmir desk.

He was adviser to the previous NDA Government's interlocutor on Kashmir K C Pant when talks were held with separatist leaders like Shabbir Shah. Anil Dhasmana, who will take over the reins of RAW will succeed Rajinder Khanna who completes his tenure this year end. Dhasmana, a 1981-batch officer of Madhya Pradesh cadre, has been with RAW for the last 23 years during which he has served on important desks, including Pakistan.



Sun, 18 Dec, 2016

Tajikistan, India step up security ties

Tajikistan and India signed an agreement on Saturday against terror financing and money laundering.

Addressing presspersons, Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon, who is on a five-day visit to India, said his government would continue to work to stabilise Afghanistan.

In his address to the media, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said both countries would deepen their engagement to deal with the threat of terrorism in the neighbourhood. "India and Tajikistan live in an extended neighbourhood that continues to face multiple security threats and challenges. Combating terrorism is an important area of our cooperative engagements," he said highlighting that peace in Afghanistan was necessary for the region. "We will intensify our defence and counter-terror cooperation with India and will work to stabilise Afghanistan in our neighbourhood," Mr. Rahmon said. "We support India's candidature for Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and India's bid for permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council."

At the end of the bilateral talks held in Hyderabad House here, the Financial Intelligence Unit of India and the Central Asian country signed an agreement to prevent financing of terrorism and money laundering. Both sides also signed agreements on bilateral investment and avoidance of double taxation.

Tajikistan invited India to invest in four free economic zones that have come up in the country and thanked it for the modernisation of the Varzob-1 Hydropower Station.

Mr. Rahmon, who also sought investment in the upcoming small and medium hydroelectricity projects, appreciated the signing of the trilateral Chahbahar port agreement between India, Iran and Afghanistan as the project will provide connectivity to Tajikistan. The two sides indicated that relationship was expected to deepen in 2017, which would mark the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two nations.

Govt. fast-tracks Special Forces modernization

Next time when Indian Special Forces would enter Pakistan or any other country for a surgical strike, Government is working towards making sure that they have the required weapons and equipment to carry out their mission more effectively and smoothly. In this direction, the Army is moving a classified proposal worth around `300 crore to buy new assault rifles, sniper rifles, general purpose machine guns and light weight rocket launchers and night vision devices at a key Defence Ministry meeting planned next week, senior Army sources told MAIL TODAY here.

REQUIRED ARMS

- 1,100 modern assault rifles as personal weapon for troopers
- 30 Sniper Rifles to replace Russian Dragunovs
- 30 General Purpose Machine Guns for firepower
- 24 Light Weight Rocket launchers
- 20 Shotguns for close quarter battles
- 500 Pistols for close range elimination of targets

As part of the effort to equip and arm the nine Para (Special Forces) battalions, the government is also likely to adopt the Foreign Military Sales route to import more M4A1 automatic rifles from the US. The proposal for equipping the Special Forces and doing away with the shortages faced by the units, the proposal has been prepared by the Additional

Director General (Special Forces) in the Military Operations directorate which deals with the units closely at the times of operations. "The old units like the 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10 and 21 Para (SF) have adequate rifles and equipment for performing their tasks but the new raisings such as the 11 and 12 Para (SF) are facing shortages of assault rifles and other equipment.

The older units had to dig deep into their reserve equipment to help the new ones," the sources informed. As per the sources, the Army has plans of buying around 10,000 free-fall parachutes, 1100 personal automatic rifles, 30-each sniper rifles, and automatic General Purpose Machine Guns, 24 lightweight rocketlaunchers, 20 shotguns and 500 pistols. "The GPMGs are a must and its requirement was deeply felt in both the surgical strikes in Myanmar and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir for effect. Special Forces are using the Russian Pika Machine Guns which have mostly been captured from terrorists who got them from Afghanistan as the leftovers of the Russian forces there in the 1980s," the sources informed. The Special Forces are also keen on getting new assault rifles as the Israeli Tavors are good but the firepower of the 5.56mm bullets is not that effective and in Indian conditions with the hardcore terrorists operating here, bullets which can cause fatal hits are required. In the presentations to the Government, the Special Forces have even cited examples where the terrorist could manage to escape after being hit by the 5.56mm bullets of security forces.

The rocket launchers sought by the Special Forces are light weight and will be easier to carry inside enemy territory, in case of future strikes against terrorist launchpads. The troops are at present using the Carl Gustaf rocket launchers which were procured long time back by the Army. The Automatic grenade launchers are also required by the Special Forces for taking down a group of terrorists or their hideouts during operations by the forces. The Special Forces presently have an outdated version of this equipment which is quite heavy. The Defence Ministry has asked the Army to process the procurement of the equipment for the forces under the fast-track procedure which is provided for in the defence procurement procedure. Under this procedure, the services can bypass several procedures and have to work with the integrated financial advisors for processing their procurement cases after approval from the Defence Ministry at the apex level. After the September 28 surgical strikes, the defence Ministry has given a go ahead to the three services with a purse of `2,000 crore to buy the equipment and weapon systems which are short in their inventory. The SF operatives belonging to the 4 and 9 Para (SF) deployed in the valley carried out surgical strikes across the Line of Control (LoC).

Vacancies to be filled in B&S cadre

After repeated demands from the Military Engineer Services (MES) about loss of revenue in cantonments because of a shortage of staff in the Barracks & Stores cadre (B&S), the Defence Ministry has initiated measures to fill some vacancies on a priority basis and outsource certain functions.

“The government has sanctioned a one-time filling of 1,573 posts in the cadre. Besides this, the cadre review of B&S is under consideration,” Minister of State for Defence Subhash Bhamre said in a written reply in the Lok Sabha on November 25.

Officials said the sanctioned posts include 450 of supervisor, 478 of storekeeper Grade-I, 481 of storekeeper Grade-II and 164 of meter reader. The recruitment process has begun.

B&S constitute the civilian staff under the MES and are instrumental in recovering dues for utilities such as rent, electricity, water and other allied charges from over four lakh residential and commercial occupants inside cantonments across the country.

According to reports in the past, the strength of the cadre was 904 against a sanctioned 3,085, which was causing a revenue loss of Rs. 3,000 crore a year over the past decade. The issue has been repeatedly conveyed to the government. by the Engineer-in-Chief (E-in-C), the head of the MES, as well as the All India Barrack & Stores Cadre association.

Business Standard

Sun, 18 Dec, 2016

Pentagon demands China return intercepted US naval drone

The rising tensions at sea come as the political balance in Southeast Asia over the disputed waters may be changing

China said its in touch with the US military after the Pentagon demanded that it return a American Navy underwater drone captured in international waters in the South China Sea.

“China and the US are using their military channels to properly handle this case,” China’s foreign ministry said in a statement sent to Bloomberg on Saturday afternoon, without elaborating further. Earlier, the Global Times — a newspaper affiliated with the Communist Party — cited a Chinese military official saying the drone was taken during a security check and the incident would likely be “resolved successfully.”

A Chinese naval ship unlawfully seized the small unmanned vehicle Thursday while the USNS Bowditch, a US Navy survey ship, was collecting it in a routine operation 50 nautical miles northwest of Subic Bay in the Philippines, according to a Defense Department statement.

While the motive remains unclear, the unprecedented move threatened to exacerbate tensions between the US and China at a time when policy is becoming uncertain. President-elect Donald Trump has threatened higher tariffs on Chinese products and questioned the US’s policy regarding Taiwan, which Beijing considers part of its territory.

‘Serious test’ - The seizure was “one of the most brazen actions that the PLA Navy has taken against US Navy for a very long time,” said Ashley Townshend, research fellow at the US studies centre at the University of Sydney. “Against a background of rising tensions in the South China Sea and Trump’s increasingly hawkish comments on China policy, this incident will be a serious test for US-China relations.”

The unmanned underwater vehicle is an unclassified “ocean glider” system used around world to gather data on salinity, water temperature and sound speed, the Pentagon said.

“We call upon China to return our UUV immediately, and to comply with all of its obligations under international law,” Pentagon spokesman Peter Cook said in a statement Friday.

The Bowditch, which belongs to the US Military Sealift Command, was on a routine mission to retrieve the drones, according to the Department of Defense. The Bowditch made radio contact with the Chinese navy ship requesting the return of the vehicle, but the request was ignored, Cook said in the statement. He described the drone as a “sovereign immune vessel of the United States.”

Typically the drones operate under their own power. The Chinese vessel was about 500 yards from the Bowditch when it launched a small vessel to retrieve the drone, according a Defense Department official who spoke on condition of anonymity because those details hadn’t been publicly released.

“China is very sensitive about unmanned underwater vehicles because they can track our nuclear ballistic missile submarines fleet,” said retired Major General Xu Guangyu, a senior researcher at Beijing-based research group the China Arms Control and Disarmament Association. “If one from the Bowditch can be detected and even snatched by a Chinese naval ship, it shows it’s getting too close to the sensitive water areas.” The nearest disputed area of the sea from the latest incident is Scarborough Shoal, about 150 nautical miles from Subic Bay. The last major confrontation between the US and China similar to Thursday’s happened in 2013, when a Chinese vessel cut in front of the USS Cowpens guided-missile cruiser from a distance of 100 yards, an incident that then-US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel called “irresponsible.” The two sides have since sought to improve communications with the intent of avoiding such incidents.

Militarising reefs - China claims more than 80 per cent of the South China Sea, where it has constructed artificial reefs and built up its military presence. On Thursday, China confirmed a report that it had installed weapons on the reefs it has developed in the sea, with a Defense Ministry statement describing the arms as a “slingshot” to fend off threats, according to The New York Times.

The US has continued to conduct what it calls freedom-of-navigation exercises, deploying vessels through the sea to underscore the right to free passage in international waters. China calls the moves provocative and a challenge to its territorial claims. Other nations in the region claim parts of the same waters, a thriving fishing zone through which more than \$5 trillion of trade passes each year.

The rising tensions at sea come as the political balance in Southeast Asia over the disputed waters may be changing. While the Philippines won a favourable ruling from an international arbitration court on its territorial dispute with China that was initiated by his predecessor, President Rodrigo Duterte said at a televised briefing in Davao City Friday that he would set aside that finding as he attempts to work with China.



Sun, 18 Dec, 2016

China Says Will Return Drone

China on Saturday slammed the US for “making a fuss” over the seizure of its underwater drone in the disputed South China Sea, saying it will return the device in an “appropriate manner” even as it called its action as “professional and responsible”.

The Chinese Defence Ministry said it had taken the drone for verification and accused the US of “making a fuss” over the incident after US President-elect Donald Trump accused China of “stealing” the US Navy research drone.

Defence Ministry spokesperson Yang Yujun dismissed the US allegations, insisting China had been “professional and responsible” to take the drone. “We had to examine and verify the device in a bid to avoid any harm it might cause to the safety of navigation and personnel,” he said in a late night statement.

Yang said the drone would be returned “in an appropriate manner”, hinting that Beijing may carry out its own examination of it but did not specify any time line. He said China was strongly opposed to such reconnaissance activities and it was highly inappropriate for the US to make a fuss over the incident.

His statement came after Trump joined the war of words with a tweet saying that “China steals United States Navy research drone in international waters - rips it out of water and takes it to China in unprecedented (unprecedented) act”.

Though the US and China have been experiencing tensions over the strategic South China Sea (SCS) for the past few years, this is the first time Beijing picked up a US drone, taking it to a different level. Despite claiming almost all of SCS, China said there was never a threat to the freedom of the navigation in the most important trade route through which trillions of dollars of goods pass.



Sun, 18 Dec, 2016

PSLV-C 37 scheduled for launch on January 27

The next PSLV-C37, that will put into orbit a record number of 83 satellites, is being scheduled for launch on January 27, said PSLV Project Director B. Jayakumar.

Sharing the dais with Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) Director K Sivan, who was in the city to receive the 100th nozzle for a PSLV rocket from city-based Resins and Allied Productions (RAP), Mr. Jayakumar said that six PSLVs had been launched in 2016. Mr. Sivan said that ISRO was planning to launch 12 to 18 PSLVs in a year. He said the 100th nozzle, that was custom-made by Vijayawada-based RAP, would be used in the historic PSLV that would launch 83 satellites. He said RAP would have to increase its production to meet the rising demand of the ISRO.

Mr. Sivan said it was firms such as RAP that had built a great reputation for ISRO projects like PSLV. Several foreign companies were opting for PSLV for its reliability and precision.

VSSC Deputy Director R Rajarajan said that usually ISRO developed a product and transferred the know-how to a private firm to create the part. But RAP had the distinction of developing nozzles and creating them flawlessly. It was able to double its production from 24 a year to 48 by innovative methods.

RAP Managing director Krishna Prasad said that his company would go in for expansion soon. Founding Chairman of RAP R Chandra Mohan felicitated the ISRO scientists. Mr Sivan and a team of engineers from VSSC spent some time studying the process being use by RAP to produce nozzles, motor casings and other products custom-made for several rocket and missiles produced by ISRO and DRDO. Solid Motors Production Group Director V. Eswaran and VSSC scientist Shaji Thomas spoke.



Sun, 18 Dec, 2016

How lung disease can block ability to self-heal

Scientists have decoded how the lungs of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) patients lose the ability to repair damages on their own.

Researchers at the Helmholtz Zentrum Munchen in Germany found that the molecule Wnt5a may be to blame for this problem. The first indication of COPD is usually a chronic cough. As the disease progresses, the airways narrow and often pulmonary emphysema develops.

This indicates irreversible expansion and damage to the alveoli, or air sacks in the lungs. “The body is no longer able to repair the destroyed structures,” said Melanie Konigshoff from the Helmholtz Zentrum

Munich. “In our current work we have been able to show that COPD results in a change in the messengers that lung cells use to communicate with one another,” Ms. Königshoff said.

Scientists discovered increased production of the Wnt5a molecule, which disrupts the classic (or canonical) Wnt/beta-catenin signalling pathway that is responsible for such repairs.

“Our working hypothesis was that the relationship between different Wnt messengers is no longer balanced in COPD,” said Hoeke Baarsma, scientist at Research Unit Lung Repair and Regeneration (LRR) of Helmholtz Zentrum München. The team correspondingly searched for possible interference signals.

“In both the pre-clinical model and the tissue samples from patients, we found that in COPD tissue particularly the non-canonical Wnt5a molecule is increased and occurs in a modified form,” said Mr. Baarsma.

Researchers said that stimuli that typically cause a reaction in COPD, such as cigarette smoke, additionally lead to increased production of Wnt5a. — PTI