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Defence hopes dashed~II

Defence analyst Mandeep Singh Bajwa has said, “The army doesn’t have modern assault rifles, steel helmets, bullet-proof jackets and night vision/night firing equipment. In addition to this, we also need to strengthen our Mountain Strike Corps. The Indian army relies mostly on Russian built T-72 and T-90 tanks. The army needs indigenous built tanks to fulfill the gap. Indigenously built Arjun Mark II is still in its trial phase, though this main battle tank has much more superior firepower as compared to Russian tanks. We need artillery guns as our main artillery gun as Bofors has become outdated.”

As far as the Air Force is concerned, the picture is not too bright either. There is a major shortage of fighter jets. Currently we have 33 squadrons of fighter jets, whereas the IAF is authorised 42 fighter squadrons. This figure will reduce further as MiG fighter jets will be decommissioned soon.

The government had signed a deal to procure 126 French fighter jets, Rafale, and 36 of these fighter jets will be delivered by 2019 in the ‘ready to fly’ condition and the remaining 90 will be manufactured in India by Hindustan Aeronautical Ltd. The induction of indigenous built Tejas will also narrow the gap, but this aircraft needs improvement to match the requirements of IAF which is also thinking of buying American fighter jets F-16 or Sweden’s Gripen to increase its strength.

There is a tremendous shortage in the allocation of capital expenditure to the Air Force. Even if we induct more aircraft, we don’t have proper infrastructure to keep them. According to defence analysts, “Runway resurfacing needs to be done, aircraft hangers need to be built, and this requires a lot of funds. The work is getting stalled due to the lack of funds. Minimum Rs 700-800 crore is needed to build proper infrastructure. We have a bigger carry-over liability in 2018-2019, so the works are going to be stalled.”

The picture is equally gloomy in the Indian navy. There is a shortage of submarines. We have currently 14 submarines in operation; half of them have completed 75 per cent of the service. INS Kalvari has been commissioned into the navy under Project-75 and five more submarines will be inducted under the same projection in the coming years. We need to have at least 24 submarines. Currently we have only one aircraft carrier along the western coast, but we need another aircraft carrier along the eastern coast. If we want our navy to be a ‘Blue water Navy’, attention needs to be paid on its modernisation.

Construction of 12 mine counter-measures vessels are also pending at Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL). There has been a delay in importing 16 medium multirole helicopters of 12 tonne each. Our navy requires a replacement of obsolete the Cheetah helicopters. These are some of the major requirements by the three wings of our defence forces. These deficiencies must be addressed on a war footing and priority must be given to modernisation of our defence forces lest we are caught with our pants down like in 1962.

More worryingly, the allocations made for maintenance of equipment currently in use is also inadequate. Similarly, allocation towards war wastage stock, including ammunition stock, is largely the same as last year. In addition to the focus on “Make in India” in defence, it is expected that indigenous design and development be undertaken by the Indian industry for producing vital components. Since its introduction, no development project has been signed. It has been allocated a paltry Rs. 44.63 crore in assistance. This year’s budget is also silent on policy issues like the strategic partnership scheme and defence technology fund. The Defence budget cuts have affected modernisation of the armed forces. However, before the Ministry of Defence can ask for more funds, it needs to address the issue of underutilisation of the capital budget. One major issue is the expenditure on modernisation.

This expense is not fully utilised every year. A sum of nearly Rs 6000 crore was surrendered in the financial year 2016-17. As per the estimates, approximately Rs 7000 crore worth of the capital budget has been surrendered from the 2017-18 capital expenditure. This year we are focusing on full utilisation of the

modernisation expenses. In this case, the finance ministry is being blamed as underutilisation of the capital budget is due to the finance ministry's machinations, which prevent big contracts from getting approved.

The defence outlay has been receding every year, but for 2018-19 it has been the lowest ~ 1.58 per cent of the GDP since 1962. This is a matter of grave concern for the armed forces. The standing committee of defence analysts had recommended that the defence outlay for its modernisation should be 2.5 to 3 per cent of the GDP. This outlay is said to be under allocation. This has serious implications for battle worthiness of the forces.

In contrast to other democracies, India spends the least on defence and national security. This calls for serious strategic analysis at the highest level. President Trump has announced plans to increase the US defence budget in 2018 by \$54 billion in order to "rebuild the depleted military of the United States of America at a time we most need it". According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, in 2015 US defence spending outstripped that of China, Russia, UK, France, Japan, Saudi Arabia and India combined. India needs a strong army if it wants to face its adversaries with strength and dignity.

THE ASIAN AGE

Sun, 10Feb, 2018

Navy Chief's Saudi visit to deepen defence ties

During his visit to Saudi Arabia from February 4-8, Navy Chief Admiral Sunil Lanba held extensive talks with its top defence brass to further consolidate cooperation between the armed forces of the two countries, officials said on Friday.

Enhancing cooperation to pursue common strategic interests in the backdrop of the changing security scenario in the region as also to explore new avenues of defence cooperation were the focus of Lanba's talks with the Saudi military establishment, they said.

The Navy Chief also held talks with Saudi Arabia's deputy defence minister Mohammad bin Abdullah Al-Aysesh, Chief of General Staff of Royal Saudi Armed Forces General Abdul Rahman bin Saleh Al-Bunyan and Commander of Royal Saudi Naval Forces Vice-Admiral Fahd bin Abdulla Al-Ghofaily.

The admiral, also the chairman of the powerful chiefs of staff committee, visited a number of key naval installations and assets in Saudi Arabia, including the naval operations centre.

Defence Secretary reviews security in Kashmir valley

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 9

Defence Secretary Sanjay Mitra arrived in Kashmir today to review the overall security situation.

Mitra visited forward areas along the Line of Control, where he was briefed on the prevailing security situation. He also interacted with the commanders and troops on the ground, a Srinagar-based defence spokesperson said.

He was also briefed on the close coordination among the government agencies in maintaining peace in the region, the defence spokesperson said.

Mitra also visited the Badami Bagh Cantonment in Srinagar, where he was

Defence Secretary Sanjay Mitra on Friday visited forward areas along the LoC, where he interacted with the commanders and troops

briefed by Lt Gen AK Bhatt, Chinari Corps commander, about the counter-infiltration and counter-terrorism grids in the Valley.

Mitra appreciated the measures instituted to strengthen the security posture and the good job being done by the security forces, the spokesperson said.

Meanwhile, the Vice-Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen

Sarath Chand also reviewed the prevailing security situation and visited the formations and units in north Kashmir today.

“During the visit, the Vice-Chief of Army Staff was briefed by the commanders on the ground regarding the operational preparedness and the measures taken to meet the security and weather-related challenges,” the defence spokesman said.

Lt Gen Sarath Chand emphasised the need for undertaking relentless intelligence-based operations to sustain pressure on the terrorist groups and maintain a high degree of vigil along the LOC to eliminate any infiltration bid.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Indian Posts on Target of Pak Terror Groups

Intelligence agencies warn J&K govt and armed forces about more possible attacks

New Delhi: Pakistan-based terror outfits are planning more strikes on Indian posts and patrolling parties, intelligence agencies have warned.

The alert, issued to the Jammu and Kashmir government and the armed forces, is part of measures decided upon at a high-level meeting after the escape of Pakistani terrorist Naveed Jatt from a hospital in Srinagar on Tuesday. A photograph of Jatt holding a gun as he stands with a companion has surfaced since then.

Intelligence agency sources said there are specific inputs that Lashkar-e-Taiba militants have been tasked by the ISI to carry out multiple attacks to “increase their visibility” and morale, and counter the government’s initiative to have dialogue with stakeholders to bring down the level of militancy in the state.

A senior intelligence officer said that Pakistan has been carrying out heavy shelling in Poonch district for the last few days to provide cover to about 45 militants who are waiting to infiltrate the border. Going by inputs that militants recently did a recce of Nangi Tekri and Krishna Ghati areas, the intelligence agencies suspect there will be another BAT (border action team) skirmish and possible ambush of patrolling parties.

Officials said on condition of anonymity that the home ministry has asked the Mehbooba Mufti government in Kashmir to review jail security and ensure that movement of jail inmates is free of breaches. Jatt, who was arrested in 2014, was freed by ultras while on way to hospital after an exchange of fire.

Authorities have told the state’s PDP-BJP coalition government to isolate and move 16 Pakistani terrorists housed in Srinagar to different jails in Jammu, Udhampur and Leh. Of them, seven are being shifted to Jammu, according to ministry officials.

Following Jatt’s escape, the state government has transferred DG (prisons) SK Mishra and replaced him with Dilbag Singh, while jail superintendent has been suspended. A high-level inquiry by the divisional commissioner has been ordered, officials said.

Pak shelling in Poonch district aimed at providing cover to militants waiting to infiltrate the border.

Police will probe if Marwaha forwarded information from the DRDO. The defence analyst said in view of this revelation, the standard operating procedures (SOPs) of India’s security framework needed urgent revision.

Delhi Police arrested Marwaha on Friday, a day after filing a case against him under the Official Secrets Act.

The 56-year-old para-instructor is currently posted at the IAF headquarters as Joint Director (Operations).

New Delhi: Investigating officers probing the role of Group Captain Arun Marwaha for allegedly leaking classified defence information, said on Friday he confessed to receiving ‘intimate messages’ and photographs from the two Facebook users — Kiran Randhawa and Mahima Patel.

Police said they suspect these accounts are fakes that were used to honeytrap him.

Marwaha, who was posted as the joint director(operations) at the Indian Air Force headquarters in the capital, is learnt to have told the police that initially, he started by sending his photographs and basic information about the air force to prove to the two women that they had indeed befriended an IAF officer.

Police said that Marwaha told them he never met Randhawa or Patel. They added that the photos on their accounts were reportedly of models and that both users appear to have deactivated their accounts after his arrest.

“Most of their WhatsApp chats were seductive text messages or photographs since December. Marwaha told us that they promised to send him videos if he sent documents related to IAF operations. He also said he did not ask why they wanted the documents,” said a police officer, requesting anonymity .

The officer added Marwaha’s case was markedly different from other cases of such suspected leaks.

“Usually, spies in the past have claimed they were researchers or were studying conflict studies. Marwaha’s case was different as he sent the images of the documents without questioning them. The persons chatting on the other end never identified themselves as spies but after a few days of chatting, they challenged Marwaha to prove that his claim of being an IAF officer on Facebook. Responding to this, Marwaha sent a picture of himself in uniform but the women said they were not convinced,”said the officer.

The officer said that Marwaha, then allegedly sent a defence document. The officer then started taking his smartphone into the Indian Air Force headquarters to take photographs, defying the no-smart phone policy.

Police have seized three mobile phones from Marwaha. A forensic analysis will reveal the number and nature of documents sent till date, said PS Kushwah, DCP (Special Cell). Police said Marwaha neither received any money and nor was any offer made. Investigators added that Marwaha, originally from Kapurthala, has had a reputed career in as an Air Force professional who was an expert in skydiving. He regularly updated his photographs of skydiving. He was due to retire next year.

Police Yet To Trace Fb User In Similar Case

This is not the first time, an IAF official has been potentially honeytrapped by the ISI.

In December 2015, leading air craftsmen(LAC), KK Ranjith was arrested for allegedly leaking classified information to woman named Damini McNaught, who had befriended him on Facebook.

The Delhi police crime branch said the Facebook user made Ranjith believe that he was chatting with a United Kingdom based media professional, who needed the information for an article she was working on. The police have not been able to trace the user of that account so far.



Sun, 10Feb, 2018

Air Force officer's colleague on police radar

By Mahender Singh Manral

Investigation into the arrest of a Group Captain, posted at the Indian Air Force headquarters, has revealed that his former colleague was a "mutual friend" of the two women with whom he allegedly shared classified information, police said. Police added that they are likely to approach the colleague, who is retired. Arun Marwaha (51) was arrested on Wednesday for allegedly sharing classified information about three new tri-service agencies with the women — believed to be working for a foreign spy agency.

"He was produced before a Delhi court, which sent him to five-day police custody," said DCP (Special Cell) Pramod Kushwaha. Sources said the investigating team Friday went to the official's home and seized pen drives and a hard disk. "They have been sent to the CBI's forensic lab," an officer said.

During questioning, Marwaha is learnt to have told police that he was in Thiruvananthapuram on work a few months ago when he was added on Facebook Messenger by one of the women. "He visited her profile and found his old colleague was a mutual friend. They started chatting. One of her friends also sent a request and started chatting with him. They spoke about two of his Air Force colleagues," the officer said. Their role is being probed as well, sources said.

They exchanged numbers and started talking on WhatsApp and Telegram, police said. The women also contacted Marwaha via an internet call through VoIP. According to police, Marwaha said he never had a video chat with the women and that they only exchanged photos.

"He told them he was with the DRDO and was currently working at the IAF headquarters as Joint Director (operations). They initially asked him for details about upcoming paratrooping events. They also asked about the three new formations — Defence Cyber Agency, Defence Space Agency and a Special Operations Division," an officer said.

The complainant, Station Security Officer Squadron Leader Rupinder Singh, alleged that Marwaha also leaked a classified document about the upcoming Air Force Exercise, which could help enemies and affect the 'sovereignty and integrity of India'. Police said Marwaha deleted all his chats with the women.

Beijing inducts J- 20 jets into combat units

Beijing, Feb. 9: China says it has begun introducing its J- 20 stealth fighter jets into combat units, in a potentially major upgrade of its air force capabilities.

Air force spokesman Shen Jinke said in a statement released on the service's official microblog on Friday that the move boosts China's ability to carry out the "sacred mission" of defending its sovereignty, security and territorial integrity.

First flown in 2011, the J- 20 is China's answer to fifth- generation jets such as the US F- 22 and F- 35.

It made its formal debut at a 2016 air show in southern China and last year was featured in a military parade marking the 90th anniversary of the founding of the People's Liberation Army.

The plane was developed domestically but is believed to still rely on Russian engines for power.



Mars on earth: simulation tests held in remote desert of Oman

200 scientists from 25 nations are putting their minds together for the project, as public and private ventures race towards setting foot on the red planet

Two scientists in spacesuits, stark white against the auburn terrain of desolate plains and dunes, test a geo-radar built to map Mars by dragging the flat box across the rocky sand.

When the geo-radar stops working, the two walk back to their all-terrain vehicles and radio colleagues at their nearby base camp for guidance. They can't turn to their mission command, far off in the Alps, because communications from there are delayed by 10 minutes.

But this isn't the Red Planet, it's the Arabian Peninsula. The desolate desert in southern Oman, near the borders of Yemen and Saudi Arabia, resembles Mars so much that more than 200 scientists from 25 nations chose it as their location for the next four weeks, to field-test technology for a manned mission to Mars.

Public and private ventures are racing toward Mars. Both former President Barack Obama and SpaceX founder Elon Musk declared humans would walk on the Red Planet in a few decades.

New challengers like China are joining the U.S. and Russia in space with an ambitious, if vague, Mars program. Aerospace corporations like BlueOrigin have published schematics of future bases, ships and suits.

The successful launch of SpaceX Falcon Heavy rocket this week "puts us in a completely different realm of what we can put into deep space, what we can send to Mars," said analog astronaut Kartik Kumar.

The next step to Mars, he says, is to tackle non-engineering problems like medical emergency responses and isolation.

"These are things I think can't be underestimated." Mr. Kumar said.

While cosmonauts and astronauts are learning valuable spacefaring skills on the International Space Station and the U.S. is using virtual reality to train scientists, the majority of work to prepare for interplanetary expeditions is being done on Earth. And where best to field-test equipment and people for the journey to Mars but on some of the planet's most forbidding spots?

Searing heat

Seen from space, the Dhofar Desert is a flat, brown expanse. Few animals or plants survive in the desert expanses of the Arabian Peninsula, where temperatures can top 51 degrees Celsius.

On the eastern edge of a seemingly endless dune is the Oman Mars Base — a giant 2.4-ton inflated habitat surrounded by shipping containers turned into labs and crew quarters. There are no airlocks.

The desert's surface resembles Mars so much, it's hard to tell the difference, Mr. Kumar said, his spacesuit caked in dust. "But it goes deeper than that — the types of geomorphology, all the structures, the salt domes, the riverbeds, the wadis, it parallels a lot of what we see on Mars."

The Omani government offered to host the Austrian Space Forum's next Mars simulation during a meeting of the UN's Committee On the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. Gernot Groemer, commander of the Oman Mars simulation and a veteran of 11 science missions on Earth, said the forum quickly accepted.

Scientists from across the world sent ideas for experiments and the mission, named AMADEE-18, quickly grew to 16 scientific experiments, such as testing a "tumbleweed" whip-fast robot rover and a new space suit called Aouda.

The cutting-edge spacesuit, weighing about 50 kg, is called a "personal spaceship" because one can breathe, eat and do hard science inside it. The suit's visor displays maps, communications and sensor data. A blue piece of foam in front of the chin can be used to wipe your nose and mouth.

"No matter who is going to this grandest voyage of our society yet to come, I think a few things we learn here will be actually implemented in those missions," Mr. Groemer said.

The Soviet Union's 1957 launch of Sputnik ignited a space race between Moscow and Washington to land a crew on the Moon. But before the U.S. got there, astronauts like Neil Armstrong trained suspended on pulleys to simulate one-sixth of Earth's gravity.

Breaking point

"You can test systems on those locations and see where the breaking points are, and you can see where things start to fail and which design option you need to take in order to assure that it does not fail on Mars," said Jojo Lousada, one of the Oman simulation's deputy field commanders who is a flight controller for the International Space Station.

Faux space stations have been built underwater off the coast of Florida, on frigid dark deserts of Antarctica, and in volcanic craters in Hawaii, according to *Packing For Mars*, a favorite book among many Mars scientists, written by Mary Roach.

"Terrestrial analogs are a tool in the toolkit of space exploration, but they are not a panacea," said Scott Hubbard, known as "Mars Czar" back when he led the U.S. space agency's Mars program. The Oman team's optimism is unflinching. The first person to walk on Mars has in fact already been born, and might be going to elementary school now in Oman, or back in Europe, in the U.S. or China," Mr. Lousada said.



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Article in Rajasthan government magazine:

'Hitler read ancient Indian texts, wanted time machine'

By Deep Mukherjee

Adolf Hitler studied ancient Indian books and wanted to make a time machine, claims an article published in Shivira Patrika, the monthly magazine of Rajasthan's secondary education department.

The article, titled 'Prachin Bharaat aur Vigyan (Ancient India and science), is written by Deepak Joshi, a government school teacher from Bikaner, and is part of the February issue of the magazine.

“Albert Einstein ne bhi kai baar prachin bhartiya grantho ki bhuri bhuri prasangsa ki thi. Hitler bhi prachin bhartiya grantho par adhyan kar time machine banana chahte the (Albert Einstein also praised ancient Indian books several times. Hitler also studied ancient Indian books and wanted to make a time machine)” reads the article.

“Thousands of years before the Wright brothers, in the book 'Vaimanik Shastra' written by Maharshi Bhardwaj, one can find information about the structure and making of an aeroplane,” reads the article. Jaipal Singh Rathi, senior editor, Shivira, said, “Whatever is written in the articles is the personal opinion of the authors and we don't tamper with them apart from making grammatical corrections.”

“I found it in several websites and books that Hitler wanted to make time machines and missiles after reading ancient Indian books. Even the Swastika found in our ancient books was taken by Germans,” Joshi said.