

Extension unlikely for Pakistan Army chief

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Islamabad

Pakistan Army chief Gen Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, who is due to retire in October, is unlikely to get an extension, a close aide of President Asif Ali Zardari has said.

However, the repeal of a controversial constitutional amendment could see him continue in office as Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani would then take a call on the issue.

"Neither the army chief nor anyone from the (ruling) Pakistan Peoples Party has forwarded a proposal to the president in this regard," Fauzia Wahab, PPP's central information secretary, has been quoted as saying this week.

"Keeping in view past examples, extensions to army chiefs have not proved beneficial for democracy and the country," she added.

At the same time, the repeal of the 17th amendment, pushed through by then president Pervez Musharraf in 2002, would see the return of key executive powers, like those relating to the appointment of the service chiefs, to the prime minister's office from the presidency.

Putin in India to ink arms deals worth \$10b

Russia to build 16 nuclear reactors

AFP, New Delhi

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, in India to sign a clutch of multibillion-dollar arms deals, said yesterday it was time for the old Cold War allies to boost trade beyond the limited scope of defence.

At just over 7.5 billion dollars in 2009, bilateral trade turnover is minuscule and the two countries aim to lift it to 20 billion dollars by 2015.

"There is the political will on both sides, but we need support from the captains of industry," Putin said during a live webcast with leading Indian businessmen and cultural figures.

"We should think about the future," Putin said, stressing the need for commercial ties to move beyond arms sales -- Russia is India's biggest supplier -- into areas such as energy, banking and information technology.

"Cooperation in hi-tech is the priority for us," he said. "The Russian government is ready to directly support this activity, with the help of additional financial assistance, if need be."

According to Indian officials, energy is emerging as a focus between oil and gas-rich Russia and energy-starved India,

always on the lookout for new fuel sources to power its growing economy.

And to serve that purpose, Russia and India signed an agreement Friday for the construction of as many as 16 Russian nuclear reactors at three different sites in India, Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov said.

The agreement "foresees the construction of up to 16 nuclear energy units at three sites in the future," Ivanov told reporters on the sidelines of talks between Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and his Indian counterpart, Manmohan Singh.

Earlier, Sergei Kiriyenko, the head of Russia's state atomic agency, said six of the reactors would be built by 2017.

Russia is already constructing two nuclear power units in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu.

"This is one of our most important and promising areas of cooperation," said Putin, who acknowledged growing competition to provide nuclear energy to India after it sealed a landmark deal with the United States in 2008.

The agreement allowed India access to civilian nuclear energy despite its refusal to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Putin was scheduled to meet his Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh later Friday and sign more than a dozen arms and energy pacts worth around 10 billion dollars.

The deals include an accord to resolve the sale of a refitted Soviet-era aircraft carrier, the Admiral Gorshkov, as well as 29 MiG fighter jets.

The sale of the Admiral Gorshkov has been marred by a series of price disputes and delayed deliveries, fuelling concerns in Moscow that India could be tempted to end its dependence on Russian military equipment.

Putin's foreign policy aide Yury Ushakov said the new accord would "suit both sides" and help put the dispute behind them.

Russia supplies 70 percent of India's military hardware but in recent years New Delhi has looked to other suppliers including Israel and the United States.

The strong ties between Moscow and New Delhi date back to the 1950s after the death of Stalin. But India has in recent years also taken care to balance this friendship by fostering closer relations with Washington.



PHOTO: AFP  
Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh walks with Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin (L) prior to delegation level talks in New Delhi yesterday. Putin is in India to sign a clutch of multibillion-dollar arms deals and said it was time for the old Cold War allies to boost trade beyond the limited scope of defence.

I'm ready to mediate with Maoists

Says Trinamool MP Kabir Suman  
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Kolkata

Kabir Suman, the Trinamool Congress MP who is not always known to toe the party line and a hugely popular poet-singer in West Bengal, says he is willing to mediate between the central government and Maoists.

Elected from the Jadavpu constituency last year, Suman believes tribals have 'a very strong reason' to raise their voice against the ongoing state offensive against rebels.

"I am absolutely ready to mediate the process of dialogue if both the parties come forward and talk it out. I have no moral scruples being middleman between the Maoists and the centre," Suman, 60, told IANS in an interview.

Criticising the government's decision to carry out Operation Green Hunt against Maoists, he said a section of people was trying to eradicate the backward tribal population from their own land with muscle power.



PHOTO: AFP  
Handout picture shows Pakistan Navy missile hitting a targeted ship during a naval firepower test in the north Arabian Sea on Friday. Pakistan successfully test fired new missiles and torpedoes from ships, submarines and aircraft in the Arabian Sea, the navy announced.

Pak navy tests missiles in Arabian Sea

AP, Islamabad

Pakistan's navy successfully test-fired a series of missiles and torpedoes Friday in what it called a message to "nefarious" forces an apparent reference to longtime rival India.

While the two nuclear-armed neighbours have taken slow steps toward restarting peace talks, they also have a history of using weapons tests as a form of diplomatic sabre rattling.

The Arabian Sea tests employed aircraft, submarines and ships. It was not immediately clear if the missiles were capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

Both countries regularly test their missile systems, and usually notify each other ahead of such launches in keeping with a diplomatic agreement.

But Friday's launches were followed by a navy statement saying the tests showed the navy's commitment to "defending the motherland." It added: "This strike capability would also send a message of deterrence to anyone harbouring nefarious designs against Pakistan."

Such statements have been rare in recent years, as the two nations have struggled to keep their peace process limping along. Late last month, India and Pakistan held their first official talks since the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks, which India blamed on the Pakistan-based militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba.

It was not clear whether the statement was an intentional attempt to stir the diplomatic waters, but similar wording has been used in the past to send warnings to New Delhi.

Pakistan must 'reinvent' itself as responsible neighbour

Says Chidambaram

AFP, New Delhi

Pakistan needs to "reinvent" itself as a genuine democracy and a responsible neighbour, India's Home Minister P Chidambaram said yesterday.

Addressing a seminar on South Asian security, Chidambaram urged Islamabad to do more to curb Islamist militancy and warned that India would respond "swiftly and decisively" in the event of any attack deemed to be from Pakistan.

Arguing that Pakistan had proved a "difficult neighbour" ever since partition and independence in 1947, Chidambaram said India's main hope was for a political transformation in Islamabad.

"It must reinvent itself ... to become a truly democratic country where real power lies in democratically elected leaders' hands," he said.

"The two countries are nuclear powers, so war is not an option," he said. "We must talk

when we can, at other times we have to simply be vigilant and alert."

Top civil servants from the Indian and Pakistani foreign ministries met in New Delhi last month, for the first official talks since India suspended dialogue in the wake of the 2008 Mumbai attacks.

The meeting made no progress on core disputes and ended with little more than a vague promise that both sides would stay in touch.

Pakistan, which had wanted a resumption of full-fledged peace talks, complained that the Indian side was only interested in discussing the issue of terrorism.

India blamed Pakistan-based militants for the carnage in which 10 Islamist gunmen targeted the country's financial capital, killing 166 people.

Asked what would happen in the event of a similar attack in the future originating from Pakistani soil, the minister said India would "respond swiftly and decisively".

Pak apex court unhappy with Zardari case

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Islamabad

The Pakistani Supreme Court yesterday expressed unhappiness over the lack of action in reopening a Swiss money laundering case involving President Asif Ali Zardari. It has asked the country's anti-corruption watchdog to speed up matters.

At a hearing, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) submitted that it was hampered in its efforts because records relating to the case had gone missing during the tenure of then president Pervez Musharraf.

Dissatisfied with this statement, judge Tariq Pervez said the court was not interested in individuals and asked the NAB to recover the missing records, Geo TV reported.

In August 2008, Swiss judicial authorities, acting on the request of the Pakistani government, closed the money-laundering case against Zardari and released \$60 million frozen in Swiss accounts.

Two top Maoist leaders killed in Andhra

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Hyderabad

In a severe jolt to the Maoist movement, especially in Andhra Pradesh, the police Friday gunned down two top Maoist leaders in separate gun battles.

Shakhamuri Appa Rao, a member of the Communist Party of India-Maoist (CPI-Maoist) central committee, was killed in Prakasam district while S Kondal Reddy, secretary of its South Telangana zonal committee, was shot dead in Warangal district, police said.

BJP faces rebellion over women's bill

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, New Delhi

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Thursday moved swiftly to quell rumblings within the party over supporting the women's reservation bill, saying it stood united and would issue a whip to MPs to support the bill when it is tabled in the Lok Sabha.

Leader of Opposition Sushma Swaraj said the BJP was in favour of the women's reservation bill and will issue a whip to its MPs to vote in favour of the legislation.

"Every MP will follow the whip," she said. She added that reports in the media about rebellion in the party MPs over the bill were "untrue and baseless."

"The party is united and of one view." However, party MP from Gorakhpur Yogi Adityanath, openly voiced opposition to the legislation.

Adityanath told IANS that the women's reservation bill was needless. "It is needless. We are against any reservation. Everybody should come to (parliament) on his/her ability," he said, adding that the BJP leadership had fallen into a trap of the Congress-led government.

"There are other more important issues to be discussed. People are suffering from price rise, there is Maoist insurgency, there is terrorism, and our country is facing grave internal and external security threats. The government wants to deflect attention of the public and MPs from these issues," he said.



PHOTO: AFP  
Pakistani soldiers work at the scene of a bomb blast in Lahore yesterday. Twin suicide attacks seconds apart targeted the Pakistani military on Friday, killing 45 people in the second attack to hit security forces in the country's cultural capital this week.

**INVITATION FOR TENDERS**

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CONTRACT NO: CIDA Project No. 7049333

**Supply, Installation and Configuration of Office Automation User Equipments for the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, Bangladesh**

Under an agreement between the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Government of Canada, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has provided funds for the **Strengthening of Comptrollership and Oversight of Public Expenditure (SCOPE) Project**. The SCOPE project intends to apply part of the allocation of this credit to payments under the contract for: **Supply, Installation and Configuration of Office Automation User Equipments for the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, Bangladesh**.

Cowater International Inc., the Canadian implementing agency of the SCOPE project now invites sealed tenders from eligible bidders for the goods/services mentioned in the above mentioned tender package. The Tender package describes four sub-systems. Bidders are required to submit bids for all sub-systems together as one proposal.

A complete set of bidding documents in the English language will be available upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Taka Three Thousand, for which a receipt will be issued. Bidding documents are available at the address below, during working hours

SCOPE Project  
c/o CIDA Program Support Unit  
House No.19, Road No. 3  
Block K (Off Park Road)  
Baridhara, Dhaka-1212  
Bangladesh  
Tel: 8824740-44

**BID DOCUMENT WILL BE SOLD UNTIL 4:00 p.m. WEDNESDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> OF MARCH 2010**

**Molecule that can switch off cancer discovered**

ANI, Washington

Scientists from the University of Colorado have found a 'switch' that can turn off cancer.

They have discovered a molecule that actually triggers cell death, and they are convinced it can be developed into a treatment for cancer and other illnesses.

They found that the molecule called caspase, which was already well known for killing cells, could be used to target specific cancerous ones.

According to the researchers, if the finding can be turned into a treatment it would be a dramatic improvement on chemotherapy, which kills healthy cells, and well as the cancerous cells to treat the disease.

"Our findings initially seemed too good to be true," Professor Ding Xue, who led the study, said.

"We wound up looking at the results from a number of angles, including genetics, cell biology and biochemistry.

"Eventually we reached the only logical conclusions we could make.

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