

Leaked letter reveals India's military weaknesses

Army chief's message to PM sparks row

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

The face-off between Indian Army Chief Gen V K Singh and the government worsened yesterday with the leak of his letter to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh listing the shortcomings of the armed forces.

According to a newspaper report, the army chief has contended in the letter that India's entire tank fleet is "devoid of critical ammunition to defeat enemy tanks," the air defence is "97 per cent obsolete" and the infantry is crippled with "deficiencies of crew served weapon" and lacks night-fighting capability.

The contents of the letter rocked Rajya Sabha with the members terming it as "disturbing" and "serious" and demanded the government take action against those responsible. Several political parties also demanded sacking the army chief.



Gen V K Singh

Responding to members' concerns, Defence Minister A K Antony said, "I have made a serious note of the observations.... After consulting the prime minister and colleagues, we will take appropriate action."

He confirmed the army chief had written the letter to Manmohan Singh on March 12 drawing his "attention to issues related to national defence and security."

"These issues are under the consideration of the Ministry of Defence. By very nature of these issues, they cannot be a matter of public debate," insisted Antony.

Earlier the defence minister met the prime minister over the issue. Home Minister P Chidambaram and Defence Secretary Shashikant Sharma were present.

This new row over leak of the letter arises a couple of days after the army chief disclosed in a newspaper interview that he was offered a bribe of Rs 14 crore by an equipment lobbyist to buy 600 "sub-standard" vehicles for the army.

The government has already ordered a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation into Gen Singh's allegation.

He was caught in a dispute with the government over his age and had dragged the latter to the Supreme Court. He retires in May this year.

Polls cannot dictate Afghan war plans

Says Leon Panetta

AFP, Ottawa

US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said Tuesday a poll showing a big drop in public support for the war in Afghanistan would not alter Washington's strategy, or efforts to battle al-Qaeda.

"We cannot fight wars by polls -- if we do that, we're in deep trouble. We have to operate based on what we believe is the best strategy to achieve the mission that we have embarked on," Panetta told reporters.

He said the objective of the United States and Nato was "to safeguard a country by ensuring that the Taliban and al-Qaeda never again find a safe haven in Afghanistan," he explained, recalling the attacks of September 11, 2001.

A New York Times/CBS poll published Monday showed support for the war in Afghanistan had dropped sharply among Americans: 69 percent of those polled thought that the United States should not be at war in Afghanistan, from 53 percent four months ago.

Recent setbacks include violence set off by the burning last month of Qurans by American troops and the alleged killing of 17 Afghan civilians by a US soldier, as well as killings of American troops by their Afghan partners.

Those incidents perhaps fueled the opinions of 68 percent of respondents who thought the fighting was going "somewhat badly" or "very badly," compared to 42 percent who said they had that impression in November.

Afghan women face jail for 'moral crimes'

BBC ONLINE

Hundreds of Afghan women are in jail for "moral crimes", including running away and extra-marital sex, a report of Human Rights Watch (HRW) said.

In a report, it said that women were punished for fleeing domestic abuse and violence while some rape victims were also imprisoned.

Sex outside marriage - even when the woman is forced - is considered adultery, another "moral crime".

The I Had to Run Away report was released in Kabul on Wednesday.

The report said that the government of President Hamid Karzai had failed to fulfil its obligations under international human rights laws.

"It is shocking that 10 years after the overthrow of the Taliban, women and girls are still imprisoned for running away from domestic violence or forced marriage," HRW Executive Director Kenneth Roth said.

The report called on the government to release about 400 women and girls held in jails or juvenile detention centres.

"Some women and girls have been convicted of minna, sex outside of marriage, after being raped or forced into prostitution," it said.

"Judges often convict solely on the basis of 'confessions' given in the absence of lawyers and 'signed' without having been read to women who cannot read or write.

"After conviction, women routinely face long prison sentences, in some cases more than 10 years."

It said that the situation had been made worse by Karzai frequently changing his position on women's rights.



PHOTO: AFP

Rising powers mull bank for developing nations

AP, New Delhi

Developing nations again seem unlikely to propel one of their own citizens to the World Bank presidency. It may not matter. A group of rising powers is mulling its own alternative to Western-dominated lending institutions.

The proposal for a new development bank is one of many to be discussed by the five fast-growing nations known as BRICS when they meet for their fourth summit today in New Delhi.

Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa account for 45 percent of the world's population and a quarter of economy at \$13.5 trillion.

Increasingly crucial for world growth as flagging Western economies skimp on imports and aid, the BRICS have long argued for more influence in and reform of Western institutions. Such organizations have dominated global aid and trade policy for decades, but made

patchy progress in meeting goals like eradicating poverty.

President Barack Obama's decision last week to continue the tradition of nominating an American as World Bank chief, over candidates from other nations as the BRICS had wanted, may add to momentum for an entirely new alternative.

A new international lender could rival the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, which focus on lending to poor nations to help speed their development and reduce poverty.

But experts cautioned that a lack of unity in foreign policy could undermine their goal.

What the five BRICS nations have in common, however, is a focus on eradicating poverty, securing food and energy supplies, developing infrastructure and gaining new technologies. They may also talk about a common position on climate change.

Pak-US army leaders meet to boost ties

AFP, Islamabad

Visiting US generals were to hold the first talks in months with Pakistan's army chief Wednesday in a further sign that the troubled alliance between the two countries is getting back on track.

Pakistan's army said the meeting would focus on "improvements in border coordination procedures" and the inquiry into the airstrikes.

The visit by General James Mattis, the head of US Central Command, and General John Allen, the US commander of Nato troops in Afghanistan, is the first since US air strikes killed 24 Pakistani soldiers last November.

The raid prompted Pakistan to close its Afghan border crossings to Nato supplies and evict US personnel from an airbase reportedly used as a hub in America's drone war against Taliban and al-Qaeda militants on Pakistani soil.

The crisis and the clandestine American raid that killed Osama bin Laden in Pakistan last May pitched the strained alliance, forged in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks in 2001, almost to the point of rupture.

The trade ministers from BRICS countries Fernando Pimentel of Brazil, Elvira Nabiullina of Russia, Anand Sharma of India, Chen Deming of China, and Rob Davies of South Africa shake hands as they pose during the BRICS Business Forum in New Delhi yesterday.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Emergency 2007 Cyclone Recovery and Restoration Project, Bangladesh (Component A)

Invitation for Bids for Procurement of Seed/Grain Silos
Credit No. 4507 – BD, Project ID No. UTF/BGD/040/BGD, Bid Package No.4G16.C

The People's Republic of Bangladesh has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the Emergency 2007 Cyclone Recovery and Restoration Project and it intends to apply part of the proceeds toward payments under the contract for the Procurement of Seed/Grain Silos. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) now invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the supply of 3,631 Nos. of Seed/Grain Silos under Package No. 4G16.C. Bidders having a minimum of 3 (three) years of experience in the supply of similar goods and related services are only encouraged to participate. The delivery period is 12 (twelve) weeks from the date of the Notification of the Award.

Bidding will be conducted through the national competitive bidding procedures as specified in the World Bank's *Guidelines: Procurement under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits*, (current edition), and is open to all eligible bidders as defined in the guidelines.

Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information and inspect the bidding documents from the ECRPP office of FAO Representation in Bangladesh (Hs. # 27, Rd. # 9A, Apt. # A1, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka-1209, Tel. 8130758/104) during office hours i.e. 08:00 Hrs. to 16:30 Hrs. A complete set of bidding documents in English may be purchased by interested bidders on the submission of a written application to the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Tk.1500.00. The method of payment for the tender documents will be in cash against a written receipt. All bids must be accompanied by a bid security for an amount of Bangladesh Tk. 225,000.00

Bids shall be delivered to the address below by 02:00 Hrs. on 23 April 2012. They will be opened immediately thereafter, in the presence of bidders' representatives, who choose to attend, at the address below. Late bids will be rejected.

FAO Representation in Bangladesh
House # 37, Road # 8
Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205
Tel: 880-2-8118015
Fax: 8802-2-811 3446

The publishing of this notice and the receipt of bids does not commit FAO in any way to any party.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Vacancy Announcement
Issued on: 29 March 2012
Deadline for Application: 18 April 2012

The FAO Representation in Bangladesh is inviting applications from qualified candidates to the following vacant position to be filled as soon as possible:

- **Assistant FAO Representative (Administration)**
(UN Salary scale and benefits for similar position apply).

Interested qualified candidates will find the post descriptions, the link to the Personal History Form (PH-Form) and the information on how to apply in the following web link: <http://www.fao.org/asiapacific/bangladesh>. Hard copies of the completed PH-Form must reach to the FAO Representation in Bangladesh, House # 37, Road # 8, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka-1205 in a sealed envelope by close of business on 18 April 2012.

PUBALI BANK LIMITED
Registered Office
26, Dilkusha Commercial Area, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh

Postponement of 29th AGM & 6th EGM of Pubali Bank Limited

This is for information of all honourable shareholders of Pubali Bank Limited and all concerned that the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, High Court Division has restrained by an order of injunction on 21.03.2012 from holding the 29th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Bank. As such, the Board of Directors in its 868th Board meeting held on 28.03.2012 decided to postpone the scheduled 29th AGM of the Bank, which was scheduled to be held on 31.03.2012.

The Board of Directors also decided to postpone the 6th Extra-ordinary General Meeting (EGM) of the Bank due to unavoidable circumstances, which was scheduled to be held on 31.03.2012.

The new Date, Time & Venue of holding 29th AGM and 6th EGM of the Bank will be notified later on.

Dated: Dhaka
28.03.2012

By the order of the Board
Sd/-
Md. Sayeed Sikder
General Manager &
Company Secretary

NEWS IN brief

Saudi diplomat kidnapped in Yemen
REUTERS, Aden
Gunmen kidnapped Saudi Arabia's deputy consul from outside his residence in the southern Yemeni port city of Aden yesterday, a Yemeni security official said.
The gunmen snatched Abdallah al-Khalidi as he was about to get into his car and they sped off with him in another vehicle, police in the city's Mansoura district said.
Kidnapping is common in Yemen, frequently in the context of regional or tribal disputes with Yemeni authorities. The victims are sometimes held for ransom, particularly if they are foreigners.

Afghanistan denies suicide plot
AFP, Kabul
Afghan officials yesterday flatly denied reports carried by local and foreign media that a huge suicide attack had been foiled at Afghanistan's defence ministry.
Reports on the BBC said that first 11, then a total of 18 people, many of them Afghan soldiers, had been arrested at the ministry compound, and suicide vests and explosives recovered near the car park.
It was suggested that as many as 1,100 employees could have been targeted.

News Corp accused of piracy plot
AFP, Sydney
Rupert Murdoch's News Corp yesterday faced a fresh barrage of allegations over its conduct, with an Australian newspaper claiming it had a secret unit that promoted pirating of pay-TV rivals.
The Australian Financial Review said the company sabotaged its competitors by promoting high-tech piracy that damaged Austar and Optus at a time when News was moving to take control of the Australian pay-TV industry.

Tibetan who set self ablaze in Delhi dies
AFP, New Delhi
A Tibetan exile who set himself alight two days ago in New Delhi died yesterday and police detained at least 100 other activists protesting against Chinese President Hu Jintao's arrival in the city.
The Indian capital is home to thousands of Tibetans who have vowed to use Hu's visit to focus global attention on the Chinese government's alleged repression in Tibet.
Police detained scores of demonstrators, many of them female, at the same venue where protestor Jamphel Yeshe on Monday doused his clothes in fuel, lit himself and ran screaming down a road as his body was engulfed in flames.

Iraq accepts Saudi envoy
AFP, Baghdad
Iraqi President Jalal Talabani has accepted the credentials of the first Saudi ambassador to Baghdad since Saddam Hussein's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, the president's office said yesterday.
The appointment of Fahd bin Abdul Mohsen al-Zaid as non-resident ambassador to Iraq comes ahead of a landmark Arab summit in Baghdad, the first regional meeting to be held here since 1990.
Zaid told Talabani that Saudi Arabia wants to "improve economic and political relations with Iraq," according to the statement from the president's office.