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India, Portugal sign defence agreement

In a bid to boost joint production and development of niche weapons systems, India and Portugal on Saturday entered into a defence agreement — one of the seven sealed during the Delhi visit of Prime Minister of Portugal Antonio Costa.

The agreement came following Portugal's support to India's multilateral plans in various technology regimes including Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) where India secured membership in 2016. Following the meeting at the Hyderabad House, both the delegations issued a joint statement highlighting convergence of interests.

“Underscoring the substantial opportunities in India's defence sector and the niche technological competencies of the Portuguese defence industry, Prime Minister Modi invited Portuguese companies to ‘Make in India’ and set up joint ventures and commercial partnerships based on joint production and technology transfer,” the joint statement stated.

Apart from the agreements on defence, visa-free travel for diplomats and marine research, both sides also issued a separate declaration for cooperation in third country. “Such projects should contribute to the local economy, regional connectivity and integration, in order to benefit third countries, by taking into account their priorities in terms of development and the needs of their people,” the declaration for bilateral cooperation in third countries stated.

‘My father's country’

Earlier, on arriving in India, Mr. Costa announced that his family shared personal ties with India. “It is a great honour for me to be back in India, my father's country, as the Prime Minister of Portugal,” he said on Twitter. Reciprocating his comments, Mr. Modi said, “You are neither a stranger to India, nor is India unfamiliar to you.” Mr. Modi presented the guest with a copy of a novel by the late Goan novelist Orlando Costa, father of the visiting Prime Minister.

Business Standard

Making use of men in uniform

By Premvir Das

Government must harness the knowledge and capabilities of those who have spent decades in the military and acquired useful skills

Much has been said and written in recent weeks about the government's decision to appoint a new Army Chief, overlooking two others senior to him. Media, opposition parties and even retired Generals made it their business to air their views on a decision that lay fully within the preserve of the government of the day. General Bipin Rawat is now in the chair and the other two have willingly decided to serve their full tenures under him. Full marks to them for their approach; in earlier cases those superseded had resigned, which also has logic. Things having now returned to normalcy, it is time to look at some of the larger questions.

First, one selects people to occupy such high positions, implying that there must be four or five qualified and eligible persons to choose from. Second, just because all of them are necessarily good, does not mean that the most senior of them must be the automatic choice; the whole concept of selection then falls through. So, some set of criteria have to be evolved and it is the business of those running the country to decide these. To say that to fight Pakistan or China is the first and primary task of the Army or that counter-insurgency is what is

important today is a matter of judgment and not of some unchanging principle; in any event, one need not be exclusive of the other. So, a decision has been made and there is no reason to believe that the new Chief will not fill the position as illustriously as many of his predecessors have.

This brings us to the larger question of the role of the military in national decision making at the highest levels. And here, the position is interesting. In authoritarian or military-ruled nations, such as the erstwhile Soviet Union or China, people of uniform have held the highest positions; examples are Marshals Zhukov, Ustinov and Chen Yi, who have been defence ministers of the two countries. In others, which have been ruled by the armed forces at one time or the other, including in our immediate neighbourhood, not just has the Army Chief been head of state but other military officers have held office of foreign minister and equivalent. This is not unnatural, given that the entire space of governance is authoritarian.

Yet, in an unabashedly democratic nation like the United States, people of military background have been equally prominent. General George Marshall, who headed the US Army through World War II, became secretary of state and was later followed by other well-known military leaders in that position — Generals Alexander Haig and Colin Powell, to name two. Others have gone on to head different intelligence agencies which are distinct from the military, such as the CIA and the NIA.

In the Donald Trump Administration, which will take office in a couple of weeks, the secretaries of defence and homeland security, two critical policy decision making positions, will be former Generals and the national security adviser is also one such. In short, here we have the epitome of democratic governance replete with people who have held high military office and will now hold very important political positions. To top it all is the story of General Eisenhower, who led the allied campaign in Europe during World War II and was later elected president of the US.

The situation in parliamentary democracies is, interestingly, different. The United Kingdom has had very well-known and influential military leaders such as Alanbrooke, Montgomery and Mountbatten, but it will be difficult to find instances when any of them rose to high political responsibility. The same seems to be true of many other countries, though there may be the odd exception. We, following the British route, have also shied away from exploiting the expertise of former military men. Yes, there have been cases of such persons having taken up political careers after retirement and becoming senior ministers — former Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh is one such — but this comes from their changed persona.

Even today, two ministers of state are exmilitary, one of whom held the office of Army Chief, but they are where they are through the political process. Another former Army Chief was given a Rajya Sabha seat but with little else asked of him. The only thing that we have done in seven decades since independence is to have appointed some former senior military men as Governors and Ambassadors, largely in billets which are not troublesome. Even nominated positions like national security adviser and heads of intelligence agencies, for which they have undoubted expertise — possibly more than many — are not for them. The point that merits consideration is whether this serves our interests best.

Professional advice to the government on military matters is rendered through a well-established process. Whether the existing set-up is not sufficiently effective is a different matter that has been discussed threadbare, but the issue here is of using the knowledge and capabilities of those who have spent four decades in uniform and acquired specific skills. How to use their capabilities rather than let them wither away is something that needs to be seriously debated.

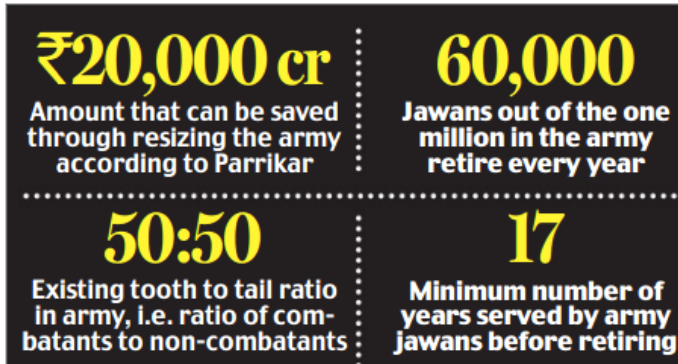
If a bureaucrat who retired a decade ago can be appointed Lieutenant Governor of Delhi or a former home secretary is considered fit to manage the affairs of the Board of Control for Cricket in India — leave aside being CAG, CVC or CEC — why cannot a person who has supervised military intelligence head the Research and Analysis Wing? Equally, why cannot one who has overseen perspective national security planning become our national security adviser or chair the National Security Advisory Board?

One senses that seven decades down the line, our political establishment is still uncomfortable with the military persona. This speaks poorly of both sides. In every walk of governance, we are making serious course corrections and the field of higher security formulation must surely be one such. If long-prevalent “status quo”

economic policies needed a “surgical strike”, then similar unorthodox approaches are needed elsewhere. Politico-military synergy is one such. Seven decades after attaining independence, the political establishment is still uncomfortable with the military persona

Def panel for raising army retirement age

In Order to enhance their combat capabilities, a key defence ministry panel has made several recommendations including increasing the retirement age of jawans by two years, doing away with manpower in non-combat arms and shutting down military farms. The recommendations of the Lt Gen Shekatkar Committee were submitted to Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar almost three weeks ago.



The report also touches upon the creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff — who would be the single point contact for the military with the government. The main aim of the committee was to suggest means to cut down on useless expenditure and use the savings to acquire and enhance fighting capabilities of the army. One of the most important recommendations of the committee was to increase the retirement age of jawans by two years which will help the army save a

significant amount on pensions and training of personnel.

Army jawans retire after serving a minimum of 17 years and depending upon their promotion while in service. “If the recommendations are accepted, jawans and junior commissioned officers till the rank of subedar major will get two more years of service,” ministry sources told Mail Today.

“This will reduce the cost of training new jawans along with the problem of providing them reemployment. Of the one million jawans in the army, almost 60,000 retire every year. For two years, the forces can also save on recruiting new manpower,” they said. The Shekatkar committee has also suggested “optimising” non-combat support arms in the army such as supply corps, ordnance and electrical and mechanical engineers who service cars and heavy vehicles. “Even in remote areas of Arunachal Pradesh and Rajasthan, one can get private agencies close to the border to service and repair army vehicles,” the sources said. Same applies for certain functions of the supply and ordnance corps like supplying rations and clothes to the forces.

Their roles can be limited to during war and other critical assignments. The committee has also recommended abolishment of military and dairy farms where several thousand army personnel and a considerable number of officers are involved in mundane tasks like cattle rearing and growing vegetables. The committee has also called for downsizing the remount veterinary corps which looks after horses and mules for ceremonial as well as operations in the higher Himalayan regions of J&K and Arunachal Pradesh.

“With helicopters and road networks allowing vehicles to reach the last points of border areas and mountains, there is no need to maintain such a large force of mules,” the sources said. The NCC is also on the radar of the Shekatkar committee as a large number of officers from the Army are sent there. “The

KEY PROPOSALS

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- It called for downsizing the remount veterinary corps which looks after horses and mules.
- It suggested that only retiring personnel be sent to the NCC.

committee feels that retiring personnel can be trained and sent there as re-employment. This will save the army the regular personnel for operational duties,” the sources said.



Sun, 08 Jan, 2017

CBI brings 'evidence' from US in Rs 1,350cr Embraer deal probe

Investigating kickbacks in the \$208million (Rs1,350crore) Embraer aircraft deal, a Central Bureau of Investigation team recently collected crucial documents from the United States, where its department of justice is probing Embraer's alleged violation of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

Top CBI sources said that a team had recently gone to the US to collect evidence on Embraer which could be useful in proving the corruption charges in the deal signed in India. “The documents are now being scrutinised,” said the officer. The agency is also in touch with Brazilian authorities to seek information about the aerospace conglomerate, alleged middleman Vipin Khanna and route of alleged ‘bribe’ payments.

CBI has already found out that more than \$5.70 million had been paid allegedly as kickbacks in the contract and these have been linked to Khanna, said sources.

Leading Brazilian newspaper ‘Folha de Sao Paulo’ has reported that Embraer has been under investigation by the US justice department since 2010 when a contract with the Dominican Republic raised American suspicions. The newspaper had reported the irregularities in September last year after which ministry of defence ordered a CBI probe. In its FIR, CBI has alleged that kickbacks worth over \$5.70 million were paid to clinch the contract of three aircrafts in 2008. Khanna, whose name had figured earlier too in defence deals probed by the agency, is named as accused along with two companies -Brazil-based Embraer and Singapore-based Interdev Pte Ltd -in the deal.

The deal for the three aircraft which were to be used by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) for air-borne radar systems was inked with Em braer in 2008. The Brazilian newspaper had claimed that that the aviation company had taken the services of middlemen to clinch deals in Saudi Arabia and India. According to defence procurement rules of India, middlemen are strictly barred in such deals.

After the probe was initiated, Embraer had issued a statement saying, “Since 2011, Embraer has publicly reported that it has been conducting an extensive internal investigation and cooperating with the authorities on investigations regarding alleged violations of the FCPA. The company voluntarily expanded the scope of the investigation, systematically reporting the progress of the case to the market.” “The company is not party of the legal proceedings in Brazil. Therefore, it does not have access to the information contained therein,” it had said.