

NEWS WRAP

AGD

India appears to be unprepared for a military action to cope with a possible two-front war against its main adversaries, China and Pakistan. Even though India's defences are far from immediate danger, its air defences are 97% obsolete, its tank-fleet lacks ammunition and is night-blind. Artillery has huge short-falls and elite forces lack essential arms. The hardware is below needs. Only 28.5 combat squadrons of the airforce are combat worthy, against the target strength of 39.5 combat squadrons. Against a requirement of 30 operational submarines in 2012, the Navy is left with only 9 operational submarines. Half of the infantry's 1.3 million strong army's foot soldiers are yet to receive combat kits as replacement for World War II vintage gear. The airforce provides 90% of the air defence cover, as ground based air defence is practically non-existent. Unlike Pakistani tanks, India's T-72 tanks from Russia do not have capabilities to fight at Night. While the T-90 tanks can be deployed with night fighting capability, India's ordnance factories are unable to manufacture sufficient ammunition for them. India last purchased artillery guns twenty five years ago. More than half of India's weaponry equipment is out-dated.

Being the top importer of military equipment in the last five years, India procures \$15 billion worth of weapons every year. It is estimated that India will spend \$90 billion on arms, over the next five years. The complicated procurement procedures require a minimum of 36 months to by an item.

RESERVED VACANCIES

There are more than 3000 recognized castes in India. Affirmative action to remove untouchability was the principle behind inclusion of Reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, for a period of ten years, in India's constitution. After six decades the reservation policy still continues. Most reserved quotas for Dalits remain unfilled, because there are insufficient number of Dalits to avail the benefits of reservation. Free primary education does not exist, and the Dalits keep suffering atrocities. Somewhile ago the Allahabad High Court has upheld the decision of the Mayawati government to grant reservation in promotions to all the reserved categories among government employees. The Supreme Court, in a recent judgement, has overruled the Allahabad High Court's judgement. The Apex Court has ordered that there could be no reservation in promotions, and the decision of the Uttar Pradesh Government was ultra vires of the constitution. The benefit of reservation would be available only at the time of recruitment, and quota was a one time benefit.

JOBLESS IN SPAIN

Half of Spain's young people under twenty five years age, have no work. In more than 1.7 million households, no one has a job. According to official data, nearly one Spaniard in four is unemployed. 367,000 people lost their jobs in the first quarter of 2012. More than 5.6 million

Spaniards are unemployed, or 24.4% of the workforce, which is close to a record high set in 1994. Spain contrasts with fellow eurozone country Germany, where unemployment is at its lowest point, since east and west united in 1990. There is a Europe-wide debate about whether government austerity imposed to cut budget deficits is threatening growth prospects. Spain's prime minister had introduced significant labour and banking reforms, accompanied by laudable attempts at reining in spending by the country's regional administrative authorities. The recession is expected to continue into 2013. The credit rating agency, Standard and Poor's has cut Spain's credit rating by two notches.

KILLINGS IN SYRIA

There has been an apparent lack of urgency to deploy 300 military monitors in Syria, on the part of western nations, to observe a ceasefire between the two sides. The ceasefire brokered by Kofi Annan, the UN-Arab League envoy to Syria, has been repeatedly broken. Even after the UN Security Council and the Syrian Government approved the 300 foreign monitors to enter Syria, barely 50 have arrived. While pledges of support for the opponents of the Syrian regime continue, there are no signs of any belated foreign intervention, on a military scale. There are no foreign medical staff nor practitioners for the rebel fighters. Meanwhile, a series of meetings involving a coalition of more than eighty countries and international organizations, including the US, Britain, the Arab League and the UN have declared support for the Syrian National Council and other opposition factions. The supply of non-lethal aid, such as satellite phones, has yet to materialize fully. Qatar and Saudi Arabia had promised tens of millions of dollars in funding for the Free Syrian Army, to purchase weapons and ammunition. But the outgunned opposition fighters remain in desperate conditions. Violence rocks Syria everyday. State sponsored violence has been kept within a threshold in Damascus, as overwhelming violence could trigger human intervention.

Western allies are finding it difficult to identify the correct factions of the diverse and fractured opposition to deal with. They want to avoid any equipment they provide, falling into the hands of Islamist extremists, known to have infiltrated rebel ranks. The sixteen months of internal conflict in Syria has left more than 11,000 people dead. Across the border, through Turkey and Jordan, guns and ammunition are smuggled. The fighters for the Free Syrian Army pay for AK-47 rifles and bullets, on the black market. Russia and China are opposed to any strongly worded UN Security Council Resolution against the Assad regime. The International Committee of the Red Cross is increasing its activities in Syria, delivering food, medical supplies, blankets and other essentials.