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## New Chiefs for Indian Intelligence

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By B. Raman

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The Intelligence Bureau (IB), which is presently celebrating its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and the Research & Analysis Wing (R&AW), the external intelligence agency which came into being in September 1968, will be having new chiefs for a period of two years from January 1,2013.

2. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Dr.Manmohan Singh, is reported to have chosen Shri Asif Ibrahim, an IPS officer of the Madhya Pradesh cadre, to head the IB and Shri Alok Joshi, an IPS officer of the Haryana cadre, to head the R&AW.

3. Both are highly experienced and competent officers who will do credit to the two organisations. While the experience of Shri Asif Ibrahim has been in his State and the IB, that of Shri Joshi has been in his State as well as in the IB and the R&AW.

4. The two officers will be heading their respective organisations at a time when they will be implementing the recommendations of the Naresh Chandra Task Force on National Security, submitted to the Prime Minister on May 24 last. The Task Force report contains important recommendations for the revamp and modernisation of our national security set-up, including the various agencies of our intelligence community and the agencies responsible for cyber security.

5. This is the first revamp being undertaken 10 years after the earlier revamp undertaken after the Kargil conflict of 1999. The effectiveness of the new revamp and modernisation will depend on the co-operation between the agencies of the intelligence community in the implementation. Both Shri Asif Ibrahim and Shri Joshi have a well-established reputation as excellent team players and this should help in the smooth implementation.
6. They will be heading their agencies at a time when globally intelligence agencies are re-strategising their charter. For 10 years after 9/11, their focus was largely on counter-terrorism. As a result, the focus on area studies somewhat suffered. There is now an attempt to pay more attention to area studies without diluting the focus on counter-terrorism.
7. Non-traditional threats to national security form an important component of this new strategy under formulation. Cyber security is one of the non-traditional threats receiving increasing attention. Protection of our national security and other critical infrastructure from cyber threats orchestrated by State and non-State actors is now an important task of the intelligence community as a whole. Shri Ibrahim and Shri Joshi will be required to play leadership role in the matter along with their other colleagues in the community. The reported fact that Shri Ibrahim, apart from being an expert in counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency and counter-intelligence related intelligence tasks, is also well-versed with cyber security should be of help to the Government in this regard.
8. Shri Ibrahim will be taking over at a time when the exercise for the revamping of our counter-terrorism architecture has run into a road-block due to political mishandling of the creation of the National Counter-Terrorism Centre (NCTC). In whatever form the NCTC is ultimately set-up to meet the sensitivities of the State Governments, the Multi-Agency Centre of the IB set up under the post-Kargil revamp will be an important core of it. Better co-ordination and understanding between the IB and the State Police under Shri Ibrahim's stewardship would be important in this regard.
9. Both the IB and the R&AW have previously been headed by officers belonging to non-Muslim minorities. This is the first time since 1947 that a Muslim officer will be heading the most important agency of the intelligence community. Many countries in the democratic world have been debating for some years now how to give better representation to religious and ethnic minorities and women in the intelligence profession and how to enhance their leadership role.
10. The nomination of Shri Ibrahim to head the IB is not only a recognition by the Government of his record and competence, but but also an acknowledgement that the time has come to give this debate greater prominence and meaning in our country. Not only religious and ethnic minorities, but also women are inadequately represented at leadership levels in our intelligence community. This needs to be rectified.

*(The writer is Additional Secretary (Retd), Cabinet Secretariat, Govt. of India)*

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