

The Hindu, 10 December 2004

Air Force Academy to admit more cadets (Rasheed Kappan)

HYDERABAD, DEC. 9. To meet the rising demands for trained defence personnel, the Hyderabad-based Air Force Academy (AFA) will admit over 400 Indian Air Force (IAF) cadets from January. Currently, 370 cadets are being trained at the AFA, the country's main training centre for IAF cadets. The intake will be further increased to 525 by 2006, the AFA's Deputy Commandant, Air Commodore Arup Raha, told visiting mediapersons on Tuesday. Officer development being the AFA's primary objective, the academy focuses on training cadets in the flying, technical, administration, meteorology, logistics, education and accounts branches. In the first six weeks, all flight cadets undergo a rigorous joint training schedule. Thereafter, flight cadets of the pilot course learn basic flying skills while cadets of the technical and non-technical ground duty courses are trained in their respective professional fields. After the first six months, technical trainees proceed to the Air Force Technical College in Bangalore and their counterparts to the second term at the AFA and to Air Force stations in Bidar, Yelahanka and Hakimpet. The training culminates in a combined graduation parade at the AFA.

The Indian Express, 14 December 2004

Air Force chief 'open' to opening up Pune airport

Pune, December 11: In what will surely be music to the ears of Pune's business community, Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal S Krishnaswamy has said the Air Force was "open" to letting civilian aircraft operate from Lohegaon airport on a 24-hour basis provided airline operators were convinced there was a demand for such a facility. "One has to know what growth we are talking about. How many flights would land? What would be the air traffic? Operating 24 hours with nothing happening on the ground will be a waste of expenditure on provisioning of landing services," he told reporters here on Saturday. "It takes money whether we operate a civilian or a military aircraft. The best is to economise services in an optimal way by gauging requirement (traffic)," he said. After all, the passenger carriers would have to foot the bill for such services while the cost would, in turn, be passed on to the traveller, he added. Although controlled by the Airports Authority of India (AAI), the Lohegaon civil enclave forms part of the IAF's Lohegaon Air Force Station (AFS) - a strategic fighter base and home to frontline fighter jets, the Sukhoi Mk-I.

The Times of India, 14 December 2004

IAF variant of BrahMos likely in three years

PUNE: DEC 13: Even as the first Rs 15-crore BrahMos supersonic missile is expected to be fitted on an Indian Navy ship next year, Sivathanu Pillai, CEO and MD of BrahMos Aerospace and chief controller (R&D) DRDO, on Sunday expressed confidence that the missile variant for the Indian Air Force (IAF) could be ready in three years. Pillai, who was here for the 56th convention of the Aeronautical Society of India, told reporters that it was the only supersonic anti-ship missile in the world since the US and Germany were still working on theirs. Developed for a global market, it is being marketed accordingly by the JV company, BrahMos Aerospace Pvt. Ltd., he said. The first missile will be fitted on an Indian Navy ship next year, at a time when air trials will also begin, to meet the needs of the IAF. The JV company has received a letter of intent and an advance from the Navy on the basis of which it has begun production, Pillai said. The anti-ship, naval variant allows for land-to-sea and ship-to-ship launch.

The Hindu, 14 December 2004

Report on Air Force promotions sought

NEW DELHI, DEC. 13. The Supreme Court today directed the Air Force Special Promotion Board (SPB) to reassess within three weeks the promotion of six Air Vice-Marshals to the rank of Air Marshals as per the 2004 promotion policy and submit the report in a sealed cover. A Bench of Justice Y.K. Sabharwal and Justice P. P. Naolekar passed this order on a special leave petition filed by the Centre challenging the Delhi High Court order striking down the 2002 promotion policy as well as the SPBs that went into the cases of Air Vice-Marshals Harish Masand and T.S. Chhatwal. The Bench told the Solicitor-General, G.E. Vahanvati, that the board should consider afresh the cases of Air Vice-Marshals Masand and Chhatwal along with the four promoted AVMs, A. D. Joshi, J.S. Gujral, F.H. Major and A.K. Singh by the SPB in 2003. The Solicitor-General submitted that the High Court had overlooked the fact that there was serious censure against Mr. Masand by the then Air Chief A.Y. Tipnis for financial irregularities and it was not considered by the SPB, which promoted him to the rank of Air Vice-Marshal. He said the High Court had also erred by quashing the Selection Boards as they not only looked into the merit and seniority but also into the personal records of these senior officers.

The Hindu, 18 December 2004

'IAF turning into technology-intensive service'

TAMBARAM, DEC. 17. At the colourful passing out parade today at the Air Force Base in Tambaram, over 1,300 Airmen were inducted into the Indian Air Force (IAF). Air Commodore M.S. Ahluwalia, Air Officer Commanding, Tambaram, said that a combined passing out parade with Airmen from the technical and non-technical trades was held after a long time. He said that the IAF was turning into a technology-intensive service with the constant induction of "high performance, state-of-the-art and high-precision military hardware" and the Airmen had to make constant efforts to improve their professional knowledge and keep abreast of the changes.

The Pioneer, 18 December 2004

IAF trainer jet decommissioned after nearly 30 yrs of service

The Iskra jet trainer aircraft, which has been the mainstay of the Indian Air Force for training fighter pilots, was decommissioned after over three decades. "Iskra jets are cost-effective, having impeccable safety record and they served the

purpose very well during the last three decades," Air Vice Marshal CV Parker and Capt Ramanaiah (Retd) told reporters here on Thursday after a formal ceremony. Lauding the services of Indian Air Force and dedication of its personnel, Air Marshal BN Gokhale, senior air staff officer of headquarters training command, said the force has a bright and promising future. The Iskra, inducted into the IAF in 1975, trained 1,500 pilots of 58 courses and 1,90,000 flying hours to its safety credits. This versatile platform allowed its trainees to learn the ropes of precise weapon delivery as well as aerial 'dog fights' with aplomb.

The Times of India, 28 December 2004

100 IAF personnel washed away too

NEW DELHI: "Utter devastation was reported from there, with a very large number of people, including almost 100 IAF personnel, feared washed away. We can't give exact numbers now. Houses and roads are completely under water," said Vice-Admiral Rakesh Kala, chief of staff of the Port Blair-based tri-Service command. Information about the 45,000 people marooned in the string of islands between Car Nicobar and Great Nicobar is still trickling in, with the armed forces mounting massive rescue operations.

The Times of India, 29 December 2004

IAF to resume operations soon

NEW DELHI: Reeling it might be under the tsunami onslaught but the IAF has vowed to rise like the mythical phoenix from its ashes. Even as its transport aircraft and helicopters provide relief and evacuate people from disaster-hit areas, IAF has firmed up plans to restore full-scale operations from its strategic Car Nicobar base soon. "We have set a target to make the base completely operational within six months and resume fighter operations from there within a year. The IAF cannot just fold up and go because of the tragedy," Air Chief Marshal S Krishnaswamy told.

The Indian Express, 31 December 2004

From the IAF station that vanished

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 30: As Air Chief Marshal S Krishnaswamy serves out the last couple of days of his distinguished career, he must wish its final chapter had been less tragic. One of his officers, Squadron Leader Celson Rodrigues from Pune, is now confirmed dead while five other officers are feared to have perished when Sunday's tsunami overwhelmed Car Nicobar. Friday's change of guard, when Air Marshal S P Tyagi takes over as new air chief, will be a sombre affair.