

The Times of India, 3 February 2005

Show marks new beginning for aviation

BANGALORE: Armed with the success of previous aero shows, Aero-India 2005 will mark a new beginning in the country's defence aviation. Apart from being businesslike, it will be on par with the Dubai and Singapore air shows. India has projected a requirement of 125 fighter aircraft for the Air Force. With a market also likely to open for over 10,000 components - in each of these fighter aircraft, small players are also looking for a piece of this pie through Aero India. And, for a country that is now being looked at for joint ventures in defence aviation, Aero India has grown phenomenally. Already, 140 Indian companies have confirmed their participation against 74 in 2003. And, compared to 176 foreign companies participating in 2003, this year, 210 will participate.

The Tribune, 5 February 2005

Sale of F-16s to Pak still on US agenda

Islamabad, February 4; Defence needs of Pakistan were discussed at a meeting of the Pak-US Defence Consultative Group here on Thursday and the US side made a commitment to speed up delivery of the promised multi-million-dollar military equipment, starting from next month. However, officials said the meeting held at the Defence Ministry did not succeed in breaking the deadlock on the issue of F-16s and the two sides agreed to hold further discussions on Pakistan's request for the aircraft.

The Tribune, 5 February 2005

MIG 29 M2, Sea Harrier to steal show (Sridhar K. Chari)

Air Force Station Yelahanka, February 5: When MIG design bureau pilot Pavel Vlasov flew in his MIG-29 M2 from Bangalore airport to Air Force Station Yelahanka for the forthcoming Air Show, he found he had a little extra fuel on board which he had to burn off before landing. So he asked the Air Traffic Control for permission to practice his display profile, and was given the go ahead. And for the lucky few who were witness to the next few minutes, he put up a breathtaking display of turns, tail slides, rolls and loops, not to mention a "kobra," at angles of attack exceeding 100 degrees. Clearly, he was pushing at the very edge of his planned profile, and as he threw the aircraft around the way one would have believed only a teenager with an MTB can do, he left no doubt that he was going to be one of the stars at Aero India 2005, scheduled to begin on February 9.

The Hindu, 6 February 2005

Sukhoi-30, Sarang to form part of Aero-India show

BANGALORE, FEB. 5. For the first time the Indian Air Force has arranged an impressive fleet of aircraft for static and aerial displays for visitors to the Aero-India international aerospace exposition. The debut of the Advanced Light Helicopter's Sarang team, and that of the Indian Navy with its Sea Harriers, Kamov-31 helicopter and Tupolev-142 aircraft and demonstration of mid-air refuelling appear set to enthral crowds. Also lined up for the big event are the Sukhoi-30 MKI multi-role combat aircraft, the Jaguars, the MiG 29s and MiG 21s, the Mi-8 helicopters, Naval Dornier-228, the Cheetal and Chetan helicopters, the Mirage 2000s, the Suryakirans and the AN-32 ambulance.

The Hindu, 8 February 2005

IAF seeks aerospace commission

BANGALORE, FEB. 7: The Government must come out with an aeronautics policy and create an "aerospace commission that will coordinate research and development efforts of aerospace-related agencies as this is the best way to reduce cost and duplication of efforts in a sector that is cost-intensive," the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal S.P. Tyagi has said. He was speaking at the inauguration of the three-day international seminar on "Aerospace Technologies Developments and Strategies" organised as part of the Aero India 2005. The Air Chief Marshal said such an entity would give the already ongoing coordinated efforts a focus, in terms of resource and technology, to enable India move forward on indigenisation. Although the indigenous projects in civil and Defence organisations were some of the best, the cost-intensive aerospace sector was dependent on imports and often India had to make do with outdated equipment and technology because of politico-economic compulsions of the seller nations.

The Hindu, 8 February 2005

Review IAF promotions: court

NEW DELHI, FEB. 7: The Supreme Court today asked the Solicitor-General, G.E. Vahanvati, to examine the promotion of two Air Force officials by consulting the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal S. P. Tyagi and the Defence Secretary and report to the court. A Bench of Justice Y. K. Sabharwal and Justice P. P. Naolekar, passed the order after perusing the new list drawn up by the Special Promotion Board (SPB) according to the 2004 promotion policy. The Bench was hearing 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 (AVMs), Harish Masand and T. S. Chatwal. Finding that the names of Mr. Masand and Mr. Chatwal were below in the list of rankings even after the new SPB considered afresh their cases, the Bench observed "whether it was a coincidence or a deliberate act that the four - A.D. Joshi, J. S. Gujral, F.H. Major and A.K. Singh-promoted earlier to the rank of Air Marshal under the old policy, have again made it."

The Hindu, 9 February 2005

Air chief takes to the skies

BANGALORE, FEB. 8: The Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal S.P. Tyagi, today had a firsthand experience on the British advanced jet trainer, Hawk. The Air Chief, who flew the aircraft at the IAF airbase at Yelahanka, venue of the fifth Aero India

show beginning tomorrow, later told newsmen that it was a magnificent flight. BAE Systems, which has signed a contract with the IAF for 66 Hawk advanced jet trainers, will deliver the first aircraft by 2006-end. "The first Hawk 132 advanced jet trainer will be flown during the next Aero India in 2007," a senior official of BAE Systems told newsmen. India had in March last year signed a contract for \$1.45 billion with BAE systems for 66 Hawks. Of this, 22 would be supplied directly by the company and the rest would be built on contract basis at the HAL complex here

Daily Times, 9 February 2005

IAF chief says Mirage purchase will trigger nuclear arms race

ISLAMABAD: The Chief of the Indian Air Force ST Tiagi has said India will replace the Russian made Mig-21 aircrafts with the latest French Mirage adding that the purchase would open a nuclear arms race in the region. Talking to BBC from Delhi, the Indian air chief said that the country was also interested in the US F-16s. Responding to a question on what would neighbour's, particularly China and Pakistan's reaction would be Tiagi said it would start an arms race. He said it has come to be known that an embargo imposed on Pakistan will be lifted. The F-16 aircraft which Pakistan bought ten years ago and whose delivery was stopped by the USA will now be supplied to Pakistan. Its clearance is expected to be secured in the next three or four months.

The Times of India, 9 February 2005

F-16s on India's radar? (CHIDANAND RAJGHATTA)

WASHINGTON: India's decision to cast a wide procurement net for fighter planes to include the US-made F-16s has sent a sonic boom through defence aviation circles given the fighter jet's touchstone status in neighbouring Pakistan. New Delhi's hand in this matter was disclosed on the margins of the Aero-India show in Bangalore with Air Force Chief S P Tyagi revealing the IAF has sought information from four foreign aircraft makers, including F-16 maker Lockheed Martin, in its bid buy 126 new jets over the next four to five years. The other producers include makers of the Swedish SAAB (Gripen), Russian MiG-29 M2 (MiG RAC) and French Mirage 2000-5 (Dassault). The IAF has Russian, French and British fighter jets in its 1500-plane inventory. Buying the F-16 will be a first.

The Indian Express, 9 February 2005

Airing new opportunities (JASJIT SINGH)

The biannual Aero India 2005 exhibition and air show starting on February 9 will probably go down in Indian aviation history as a landmark for a number of reasons. Exhibition space is over-subscribed in spite of additional space having been created in anticipation. American defence and aviation industry giants (who had declined to go to the prestigious Paris air show 18 months ago) will be present, bringing their top-of-the-line aircraft and equipment like the F-15 multi-role combat aircraft that has proved itself in numerous wars. The US National Intelligence Council has recently pointed out the ongoing changes due to the rise of China and India (soon to be the world's second and third largest economies in Purchasing Power Parity terms) and the challenges and opportunities this would imply. And hence the imperatives of deeper engagement with the West. One of the signs of the shift from West to East is the greater salience of defence exhibitions and aviation industry shows in Asia, from Singapore to Dubai and Islamabad, where Bangalore stands out well into the sky, because there is a growing market for civil and military aviation systems.

The Indian Express, 10 February 2005

F-35 on display, F-16 missing in action at Aero India '05 (SHIV AROOR)

BANGALORE, FEBRUARY 9: The American F-35 joint strike fighter (JSF) project may be nowhere within India's grasp, feels Lockheed Martin, unless the country gets its 'data protection' act together and the two countries sit down and work out a comprehensive list of agreements. There was a buzz in 2003 of a possible offer to the Indian government for participation in the international project, which also includes countries like the UK, Australia and Singapore. For now, however, Lockheed is focused on pitching its F-16 multi-role fighter for a 124-unit order the IAF will soon be shooting out requests for. Incidentally, the F-35 project is meant to replace the USAF's F-16 fighters, which are by now "vintage", despite a repeated programme of upgradation. "If the F-16 is some vintage, why would India have such concerns of it being sold to Pakistan? The F-16 is still the best, more capable multi-role fighter today compared to, say, a Gripen," said Michael N. Kelley, part of Lockheed's international business development division. Kelley insists that as the F-35 is developed, a whole lot of technology is often switched with the new block of F-16s.

The Tribune, 10 February 2005

C-130 J Hercules on offer

THE entire aeronautics world had taken note of the Indian Air Force (IAF) requirement for 126 Multirole Combat Aircraft (MCRA) and Lockheed Martin was keen to ensure that the F-16 becomes a leading contender, company regional vice-president Dennys Plessas stated. On worries about the sanctions issue casting a shadow over possible US arms supplies to India, he said: "This is a government to government issue, but I can assure you that India and the US now have a very deep and strong relationship. Mistrust is a thing of the past." Lockheed Martin was also offering the C-130 J Super Hercules transport aircraft to the Indian Air Force.

The Tribune, 10 February 2005

Airshow starts off in a blaze of colour and sound (Sridhar K Chari)

Bangalore February 9: The Indian Air Force's new star acquisitions like the air to air refueller IL-78 and the Sukhoi -30 MKI vied with indigenous products like the Kirans, the IJT, and the ALH Dhruv along with the old airshow favorites like the Mirage and Jaguar, to "touch the sky with glory" over the Air Force Station, Yelahanka, today. Aero India 2005, inaugurated by

Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee, got off to a start in a blaze of smoke and thunder in the presence of business delegations and senior armed forces officers from 31 countries including many chiefs of air staff. The Indian Navy featured the enormous Tu-142 'Albatross' maritime reconnaissance aircraft -the Sentinel of the Oceans-the Kamov-31 Airborne Early Warning Helicopter, and for the first time ever, the Sea Harrier.

The Hindu, 11 February 2005

IAF to buy 40 Tejas aircraft

BANGALORE, FEB. 10: The Indian Air Force will soon sign an agreement with the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) to buy 20 indigenously built Tejas (Light Combat Aircraft) with the option to buy 20 more in a Rs. 4,000-crore deal, the Air Chief Marshal, S.P. Tyagi, said today. "We are buying them in two phases of 20 each," he told presspersons on the sidelines of the Aero India Show. Each aircraft will cost Rs. 100 crores. The Air Chief Marshal said that the LCA was a good package. The IAF hoped to start receiving Tejas by the end of 2008 and form a squadron by 2010-2012. The tail-less, single-engine supersonic fighter, being developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation's (DRDO) Aeronautical Development Agency, made its maiden flight on January 4, 2001 and is expected to replace IAF's MiG fleet from the next decade.

The Hindu, 11 February 2005

Lockheed Martin to sell surveillance aircraft to India

BANGALORE, FEB. 10. The U.S. aerospace major, Lockheed Martin, today said that it had secured the export licence from the American Government for the sale of P-3C Orion, the maritime surveillance aircraft, and the C-130 J 'Hercules,' to India. The Lockheed Martin regional vice-president, Denny Plessas, told presspersons at the ongoing Aero India 2005 here that it was his "understanding" that India was looking to buy eight to 12 P-3C Orions and six to eight C-130 Js. "That will be their initial requirement." He said a team of U.S. naval officials would visit India next week to hold talks with Indian Navy officials over the sale of P-3C maritime surveillance aircraft. "Specifications will be decided at the meeting." Lockheed Martin signed an agreement with Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. on Wednesday for refurbishment and maintenance of the P-3C.

The Tribune, 11 February 2005

Unmanned copter on display (Sridhar K Chari)

Bangalore, February 10: The spectre of sanction laws over both buyer and seller notwithstanding, requests for information has gone out from the Indian side, and top American defence equipment companies at Aero India are lining up a variety of products for sale to Indian armed forces, including an unmanned, completely programmable helicopter from the house of Northrop Grumman (NG). This unusual, 'autonomous' helicopter is being developed for the US Army and the US Navy. This helicopter, based on a commercially available platform from Schweitzer, has no pilot's joy stick and will be flown completely by a computer into which various parameters can be programmed in such a way that it can perform anything from reconnaissance to rescue missions.

The Hindu, 14 February 2005

Aero-India 2005 signs off in style (Rasheed Kappan)

BANGALORE, FEB. 13. When the Suryakiran aerobatic team signed off in style over the Yelahanka Air Base this evening, the big American Hercules and P-3C Orion surveillance aircraft stood imposingly on the tarmac. The two aircraft symbolised the biggest story that emerged out of the international airshow, "Aero-India 2005": The U.S. realisation about the enormous potential in the big Indian military and civilian markets and India's maturity to strike deals on an equal footing. The Americans flexed their marketing muscles. But direct purchase as a concept was passé. Indians demanded technology transfer and joint production deals and they got them in plenty. The nearly \$2-billion contracts announced at the air show reflected India's growing confidence in its ability to produce even for the world market.

The Tribune, 15 February 2005

Sale of weapons: US firms assure secrecy

New Delhi, February 14: US armament suppliers today assured that they would maintain a technology balance and secrecy in military sales of hi-tech weapons systems and platforms, which they were offering to India and which they were already supplying to Pakistan. The assurance came from the top officials of the American armament manufacturer and supplier Lockheed Martin, whose weapons platforms like the F-16 Fighting Falcon and P3C Orions form the frontline of Pakistani armed forces. The officials here said that a "technology balance and secrecy" would be maintained in the sales of weapons and missiles to India. Although officials of the American aviation giant did not seem very pleased at being riddled with questions on offers to India of weapon platforms, which are already in use by Pakistan but said that there would be no leakage of any information regarding the weapons sale to India. Lockheed Martin is eyeing the vast India defence market and had also brought in their F-15 E aircraft to the Aero India show recently raising the pitch among the competitors wanting to supply 125 fighter aircraft to the Indian Air Force (IAF). The officials in their defence pointed out that other major companies like the French Mirage, as well Russians had also carried out sales to Pakistan and China of weapon systems which were already in use by the Indian forces. The company today unveiled its medium lift transport aircraft C-130J in its rapid reaction capability to Indian special forces in Agra and to top IAF and Ministry of Defence officials here.

The Hindu, 17 February 2005

Car Nicobar, a non-family posting for Air Force (Aarti Dhar)

CAR NICOBAR, FEB. 16: Once considered a prized posting, Car Nicobar is no longer a family station for the Air Force personnel. The Indian Air Force (IAF) lost 114 men here when the tsunami devastated the base on December 26 last year. Within a couple of weeks of the tragedy, the entire staff of the Air Force station was shifted out to relieve them of the trauma as

many of them had lost their family members and many others had seen their colleagues die. The Air Force station, including the runway, and most part of the residential colony was ravaged. Residential houses, a school, a commercial complex and one cinema hall were destroyed. While some buildings have been reclaimed by the IAF, the Military Engineering Service (MES) team is assessing the extent of the damage and making reconstruction plans. Till the reconstruction, the station has been pronounced a non-family posting. Car Nicobar had been a preferred place as it was known for its scenic beauty. Now the air station is being used for flying relief material and logistics to the far-flung affected areas of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The Indian Express, 18 February 2005

IAF teams to inspect Israeli, French missiles

NEW DELHI: WITH competition down two firms, the IAF will dispatch teams to Israel and France next month to inspect the two air defence missile systems competing for a Rs 1,500-cr contract, sources said. Israeli defence firms Rafael-IAI's Spyder system and Anglo-French MBDA's Mica have been shortlisted for the final round of trials to equip the New Western Air Command with a comprehensive ground-based rapid action all-weather air defence capability.

The Times of India, 19 February 2005

IAF to hold ex-chiefs' meet (RAJAT PANDIT)

NEW DELHI: Following in the footsteps of the Army, the Air Force now plans to turn to its former chiefs to learn a thing or two from retired "air warriors" on the way ahead for the force. IAF chief, Air Chief Marshal Shashindra Pal Tyagi, has already issued invitations to the former chiefs staying in and around Delhi for the "conclave" to be held in mid-March, say sources. These include Air Chief Marshals N C Suri (1991-1993), S K Kaul (1993-1995), S K Sareen (1996-1998), A Y Tipnis (1999-2001) and S Krishnaswami (2002-2004), among others. But what does the IAF, grappling with the exigency to integrate air and space-based systems, hope to learn from the veterans? "Soul-searching", replies a senior officer. No, the conclave will not discuss "operational issues". But if this bid to tap into institutional memory could discuss some crucial issues confronting the IAF, the endeavour would certainly be purposeful. For one, the IAF, the fourth-largest in the world after United States, China and Russia, is still without an Aerospace Command to tackle the present day high-tech battlefield. For another, with the aging MiG-21s constituting over 45 per cent of the total fighters, there is a need to modernise the combat fleet.

The Tribune 22 February 2005

2-yr extension granted to AVM Masand

New Delhi, February 21: Finding itself on a sticky wicket regarding evaluating the promotions of four officers to the rank of Air Vice Marshals (AVMs) in 2003, the Defence Ministry today told the Supreme Court it had decided to give two-year extension to retired Air Marshal Harish Masand, who was allegedly rated down during the promotion process. This came as a major victory for Masand on whose petition the Delhi High Court had quashed the promotions of four AVMs because the Special Promotion Board (SPB) of February, 2003 had enhanced the board assessment marks from 5 per cent to 20 per cent keeping him out of contention. After being denied promotion, Masand, had retired on January 2004. The apex court had directed the Defence Ministry to reconstitute the promotion board and evaluate the promotions afresh on the basis of 95 per cent (Appraisal Report) and 5 per cent (board marks) ratio.

The Times of India, 23 February 2005

US leery of Indian interest (CHIDANAND RAJGHATTA)

WASHINGTON: The Bush administration is having a hard time believing India is serious about acquiring F-16 fighter planes from American firms. Despite the keen interest shown by Lockheed Martin to sell the F-16s to India and reciprocal interest from the Indian Air Force about acquiring the fighter jets, Pentagon officials are leery about the deal. Indian officials who last week met the concerned officers from the Defense Security and Cooperation Agency (DGCA) in connection with the inquiries about F-16 encountered incredulity and searching questions about the sudden interest. There is also some conjecture in defence circles that the RFI on F-16 is aimed at scuppering the Bush administration's move to supply the fighter jets to Pakistan. By the same token though, it also opens the window for US to sell the planes to Pakistan... Lockheed Martin is eager to get a slice of the Indian defence pie, considering New Delhi is currently one of the biggest spenders in the world as it updates its antiquated military and fills in the gaps. Pakistan too has indicated it has not problems with India getting the F-16s as long as it gets them too. Islamabad's greater concern is said to be the ongoing US-India dialogue on the Patriot missile defence system. Indian acquisition of Patriots could nullify Pakistan's nuclear weapons and create a serious 'imbalance,' according to reports in the Pakistani media.

The Hindu, 24th February 2005

IAF finds new use for mid-air refuellers

NEW DELHI, FEB. 23: The Indian Air Force (IAF) today pressed into service its mid-air refuellers to combat the energy crisis in the snow-bound areas of Jammu and Kashmir due to disruption of surface routes. Two IL-78 refuellers took off from Agra and by evening had transported over 50,000 litres of kerosene and petrol to Jammu and Kashmir. Soldiers positioned in the second line of defence along the Line of Control (LoC) along with specialised counter-insurgency troops from the Rashtriya Rifles continued digging into avalanches that had flattened hamlets in many parts of the State. Soldiers also supplied rations, medicines and blankets to those rendered homeless by the avalanches. In an innovative move, the IAF converted two of its mid-air refuellers into gigantic kerosene and petrol tankers to deliver the much-needed fuel to the affected State. The recently acquired planes, which were normally used to replenish fighter aircraft in mid-air, loaded fuel from Chandigarh and Pathankot after authorities felt that transporting liquefied petroleum gas cylinders would be risky. Officials said similar sorties would be carried out over the next few days. In addition, the IAF has so far carried to safety 25,000 people, including soldiers,

paramilitary personnel and civilians. It will continue with the deployment of six AN-32 medium transport aircraft, two IL-76 heavy transport aircraft and 12 helicopters for evacuation operations and emergency dropping of rations and medicines.

The Telegraph, 25 February 2005

East on F-16 radar

New Delhi, Feb. 24: The air force is developing its base in Kalaikunda near Kharagpur in Bengal for joint training with foreign air forces. The first exercise from Kalaikunda with fighter aircraft from the US Air Force is scheduled to be held by the end of the year. Aircraft operating out of Kalaikunda for training and exercises usually fly in airspace over the Bay of Bengal. Kalaikunda, originally a Second World War base built by Britain's Royal Air Force, is home to the IAF's MiG 27 fighter squadrons. The assistant chief of air staff (operations), Air Vice-Marshal S.C. Mukul, said here today that Kalaikunda will be the second IAF base to be upgraded to host teams from foreign air forces. The first is the hub for Mirage squadrons at Gwalior. A US Air Force and the Indian Air Force deployed fighter aircraft for joint exercises in Gwalior last year for the first time in three decades after the frostiness in military to military relations wore out. The Kalaikunda base would have better billeting facilities for foreign teams. The US sent F-15e Tomcats and the IAF Sukhoi 30K and Mirages for the "Cope Thunder" exercise. The US is considering sending F-16 fighter aircraft - that the IAF is looking at with interest as a possible acquisition - for this year's drill. "We are developing international facilities at the base so that it can host joint manoeuvres," he said and expected the facilities to be ready for the second India-US fighter exercises likely in November-December this year.

The Tribune, 26 February 2005

Buying US aircraft, Avoid a knee-jerk reaction (K. Subrahmanyam)

India has sent out requests for information (RFI) to various leading aircraft manufacturers in the world as a preliminary step to float tenders to purchase 126 multi-role combat aircraft. This has become necessary as the MiG fleet is ageing fast and the induction of India's Tejas aircraft in numbers is sometime away. The deal is worth 3.5 to 4 billion dollars. Till a few years ago it was unimaginable that India could go in for such a large arms purchase, offering to pay cash. Our foreign exchange balance position never allowed it. Now it does. The bidders are likely to be Russia, Sweden, the UK - German European consortium, France, and the US. In the past India had purchased combat aircraft from Russia, France and the UK and they are all in our current inventories. Till now we have not purchased aircraft from Sweden. The US has supplied only Fairchild packet supply dropping aircraft (partly purchased in 1958-59 and partly gifted in 1963 as part of the US military aid in the aftermath of the Chinese attack on India). A former Air Force Chief has issued a statement highlighting that the US is not a reliable supplier and, therefore, there are risks of interruption in supplies in the case of the US purchase, both in respect of aircraft as well as subsystems, spares and ammunition.

The Times of India, 26 February 2005

IAF's two new airbases in Rajasthan

NEW DELHI: Even as the Army restructures formations based along the Indo-Pak border to carve out a new South-Western Command to bolster strike capabilities, the IAF is establishing two new fighter airbases in Rajasthan. The new airbase at Phalodi, 110 km northwest of Jodhpur, will be "strategically and operationally very important" for the IAF since it is close to the western border. "South-Western Air Command chief Air Marshal S K Jain will formally inaugurate the Phalodi airbase on March 1. Fighters, transport aircraft and helicopters have already begun operations from there. The second airbase at Deesa will take some time to become operational," said a source. The Phalodi station, which is also equipped with sophisticated surveillance radars, will also act as a "diversionary base" since it falls in the middle of the "triangle" constituted by Jaisalmer, Suratgarh and Jodhpur airbases. The Army is also working to establish its sixth operational command, the South-Western Command, which will operate in conjunction with the Udampur-based Northern Command and Chandimandir-based Western Command.

The Hindu, 27 February 2005

IAF comes out in flying colours (Luv Puri)

PIR PANJAL, FEB. 26: Thousands of people who live on this 11,000-foot high mountain rampart are virtually cut off from the rest of the country. The land route has been blocked due to heavy snowfall. Airdropping of food packets and round-the-clock rescue sorties by the Air Force provide the much-needed relief to the distressed residents here. The likes of Squadron Leader A. Jena have set a record of sorts in the last 20 days of rescue operations in the higher reaches of Jammu and Kashmir. A single pilot has rescued more than 500 persons from the remote and inaccessible parts of the State swamped by unprecedented snowfall. This was one of the biggest peacetime operations by the Indian Air Force in the State going by sheer logistics. Mr. Jena said: "I was in Congo for a year as part of the peace-keeping forces and transported United Nations peacekeepers under insurgency-like conditions. In the last 20 days I have flown all over Jammu and Kashmir and what satisfies me is the cent per cent success rate in the operations."