

The Tribune, 1 January 2005

Car Nicobar IAF base to be operational in 6 months (Sridhar K Chari)

Port Blair, December 31: The Car Nicobar Air Base in the severely affected Car Nicobar islands can be made ready to operate fighter planes like Sukhoi-30 in about six months and the new plans have only been put off and not cancelled, Air Commodore K.K. Vijay Kumar, Air Officer Commanding, Air Forces Component, Triservices Command, A&N, said here today. Sukhoi-30s which were supposed to arrive at the base in the first week of January would obviously not do so now, he told The Tribune, "but they will indeed get here eventually. We have to first get the infrastructure going. Fighters need more."

The Tribune, 1 January 2005

Tyagi takes over as air chief

New Delhi, December 31: The Indian Air Force (IAF) today got a new Chief with Air Marshal S.P. Tyagi taking over as the Air Chief Marshal succeeding Air Chief Marshal S. Krishnaswamy at the Air Headquarters here. Having actively participated in both the 1965 and 1971 Indo-Pak wars, Air Chief Marshal Tyagi was commissioned into the fighter stream of the IAF on December 3, 1963, and has the distinction of having commanded three Air Force Commands, Western, Central and Gandhinagar-based South Western command.

The Hindu, 3 January 2005

Restoration work on IAF base to begin soon

TAMBARAM, JAN. 2. Work on restoration of the Indian Air Force station in Car Nicobar will begin soon, Air Commodore M.S. Ahluwalia, Air Officer Commanding of the IAF station in Tambaram, said today. Talking to reporters on the IAF's role in relief and rescue operations in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which was severely affected in last Sunday's tsunami, the officer said the Air Force was continuing its rehabilitation work in the affected areas. Hundreds of IAF personnel in the island were evacuated and sent to their native places in India, Mr. Ahluwalia said, adding they were all sent on a month's leave. Personnel from the Tambaram station were deployed at present in the Car Nicobar base. He said that 25 IAF officers and their family members perished while 88 were still missing. There was a high casualty of the officers as their quarters were located closest to the shore.

The Indian Express, 4 January 2005

First stop as IAF chief, Tyagi heads for Car Nicobar with wife

NEW DELHI: Newly-appointed Air Chief Marshal S.P. Tyagi and his wife Vandana Tyagi left for Port Blair on Monday evening on what is his first official visit in his new capacity. Apart from visiting tsunami-affected areas, an IAF spokesperson said Tyagi would take stock of the reconstruction of the IAF base at Car Nicobar, being carried out by a Works Team dispatched by Air Headquarters just before New Year.

The Tribune, 5 January 2005

MiG 21 crashes near Bikaner, pilot safe

Jaipur, January 4: In the first mishap involving an IAF aircraft this year, a MiG 21 fighter jet today crashed near Bikaner in Rajasthan. The pilot ejected safely and there was no loss of life or damage to property on the ground. The plane crashed in a farm at Inda village, 20 km from Bikaner, soon after taking off on a routine sortie from the Nal air base. A court of enquiry has been ordered.

The Tribune, 5 January 2005

Sukhois, Jaguars in one year

Car Nicobar, January 4: Air Marshal S.K. Malik, Vice-Chief of Air Staff, who visited Car Nicobar, told The Tribune that the aim of getting the Car Nicobar airbase ready to receive fighters in six months may be too ambitious. "Four Sukhois and five Jaguars were supposed to land at Car Nicobar on January 3. We are now determined that we will get them, on the same day next year," he said.

Daily Excelsior, 8 January 2005

Efforts on to keep IAF a potent fighting force: Tyagi

NEW DELHI, Jan 7: Asserting that the Indian Air Force was making moves to ensure that there was no drop in the fighter aircraft strength of the country, the new Air Chief S P Tyagi today said India was negotiating with a number of countries, including the US, for acquisition of 125 multi-role aircraft. "The efforts are to keep IAF as a fairly potent fighting force in the region," Tyagi said in his first interaction with the media after taking over the reins of office at the helm of the Air Force. "We are looking at various vendors, including the US F-16 Fighting Falcon, Swedish Gripen, Russian Sukhois and the French Mirage 2000," Air Chief Marshal Tyagi said, declaring that the gap created by the phasing out of older MiG-21s would be filled at the earliest.

Daily Excelsior, 8 January 2005

IAF to stick with merit based promotions

NEW DELHI, Jan 7: The Indian Air Force has submitted to the Supreme Court the recommendations of the reconstituted Special Promotion Board, even as the Service said it will stick to its merit-based promotion policy. "We respect and will abide by the judgement of the Delhi High Court, but whether we agree with the verdict is a matter of individual judgement," Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal S P Tyagi today said, in his maiden press conference after taking over command of the IAF on December 31, 2004. However, he stressed that the policy was not framed by the outgoing chief, but was a collegial decision of

the entire service. "The IAF chief is not the final arbiter in matters of promotion but part of a continuous, well thought-off process," ACM Tyagi noted, stressing the service believed in the concept of merit-based promotions.

The Times of India, 9 January 2005

IAF is keen on Aerospace Command, says new chief (Rajat Pandit)

NEW DELHI: Space is fast becoming vital in all military operations. Though space-based laser and other orbiting weapons still belong to the realm of cinematic fantasy, satellites are now increasingly being used for military communications, tracking enemy forces and precision guiding of "smart bombs". The Indian Air Force has finally taken note of this. In the clearest indication yet that groundwork for setting up the country's first-ever Aerospace Command is underway, the new IAF chief says his force is very keen to integrate air and space-based systems. "The IAF has always been interested in having an Aerospace Command. Space is an arena where warfare is definitely headed...and to us, it's a natural progression. We are already using space in different areas," said Air Chief Marshal Shashindra Pal Tyagi on Friday.

Hindustan Times, 18 January 2005

India has so far sent 500 mt of relief to Lanka (PK Balachandran)

Colombo, January 17: India has so far sent 500 metric tonnes of relief supplies to tsunami-ravaged Sri Lanka with the aircraft of the Indian Air Force and ships of the Indian Navy providing a "continuous bridge" between India and the affected parts of Sri Lanka. The Indian Air Force had flown 340 sorties to deliver relief supplies and rescue people in the 12 districts hit by the killer waves on December 26, the Indian High Commission said on Monday. Fourteen Indian ships had brought relief supplies, disaster-management personnel, medical specialists, para medical staff, engineers and technicians to the island. At the request of the Sri Lankan authorities, the Indian Navy's survey ship INS Sutlej had completed surveys of Galle and Colombo harbours.

The Washington Times, 17 January 2005

India to relocate air force bases

Port Blair, Jan. 17: The Indian air force, worried about its installations on the tsunami-devastated Nicobar Islands, plans to relocate some of them to the Indian mainland. Vice Admiral Raman Puri said that the air force is scouting for mainland areas after the tsunami devastated some of its installations on Car Nicobar, the Indian Express reported Saturday. Recently the Indian government, criticized for restricting aid agencies on the distressed islands, cited security concerns as one of the major reasons for the restrictions. The location of the bases is advantageous because it gives India a strong defensive position in Southeast Asia, the BBC reported Friday. The southernmost island is just 94 miles from Indonesia's Sumatra and the northernmost fewer than 31 miles from the Coco Islands controlled by Burma.

The Times of India, 19 January 2005

They saved many, but saw their families go (Jayanta Gupta)

KOLKATA: For a few Indian Air Force pilots at the Air Force Station on Car Nicobar a few weeks back, the tsunami made them yearn for the "far lesser" horrors of a battle. Not surprising, if you consider what they went through. One young IAF pilot saw, from the safety of his chopper, his entire family being washed away. "Give us a full-scale war any day but spare us this horror. I hovered over the water and saw my entire family being washed away," the pilot recounted. When the first tremor was felt, the station commander ordered all aircraft and helicopters to take off. Many pilots were still in their pyjamas. "There was no flying scheduled for the morning and pilots were taking it easy. After the first quake, we were ordered to take off," another said. Even as the last of the planes lifted off, Car Nicobar was rocked by the second quake and the hangars collapsed. The runway was destroyed as they watched the waves hit their quarters and wash away their families.

The Times of India, 20 January 2005

India, Israel to conduct military exercise

LONDON: India and Israel have agreed to fulfill a number of bilateral equipment deals and conduct a joint air manoeuvres later this year as a mark of their burgeoning defence ties, a leading defence weekly has claimed. The third joint working group at its meeting in Tel Aviv in December 2004 discussed New Delhi purchasing Israel Aircraft Industries Heron II medium-altitude, long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicles and jointly extending the range of the Barak point defence system for the Indian Navy, the Jane's Defence Weekly, said in its latest issue. The two sides also agreed to hold joint exercises in which Israeli F-16 multi-role fighters will be pitted against India's Russian-made Sukhoi Su-30Mk1 multi-role fighters. The venue and schedule of the manoeuvres is yet to be disclosed.

The Times of India, 23 January 2005

HAL displays Dhruv choppers to Chilean Prez

BANGALORE: India on Saturday displayed its indigenously developed aircraft - Advanced Light Helicopter, Light Combat Aircraft and the Intermediate Jet Trainer - to visiting Chilean President Ricardo Lagos with expectations of Santiago becoming the first customer in South America for the Dhruv helicopters. Lagos witnessed superb manoeuvres by the single-engine, fly-by-wire supersonic fighter Tejas billed as India's future workhorse and of the Intermediate Jet Trainer (IJT), as officials of aircraft maker Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) briefed the visiting delegation about the progress made by the country in the aerospace sector. Lagos, arriving in Bangalore yesterday, told reporters that Chile was considering buying the Dhruv helicopters, which HAL is jointly marketing with Israeli Aviation Industry (IAI). HAL is also looking at export potential of LCA and IJT in the coming decades after its induction in the Indian Air Force.

Hindustan Times, 24 January 2005

Selection of pilots: IAF goes in for new system (Man Aman Singh Chhina)

Chandigarh, January 23: Youngsters aspiring to become pilots in the Indian Air Force will now have to face a modern version of Pilot Aptitude Battery Test (PABT), which will test their psychomotor skills to ascertain if they are fit to fly the modern generation of aircraft. A senior scientist of the Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) told Hindustan Times here today that the new system has been christened Computerised Pilot Selection System (CPSS) and the No. 2 Air Force Selection Centre is currently testing it in field trials. The IAF and DRDO have jointly developed the new system. Young boys and girls who wish to join the IAF as pilots have to undergo tests at the selection centres of the IAF in Mysore, Dehradun and Varanasi in order to enable the testing officers to find out if they have the requisite qualities to handle various systems in an aircraft.

The Statesman, 28 January 2005

USA to hardsell arms at show

NEW DELHI, Jan. 27. Keen on selling several big-ticket items to the Indian armed forces, the USA is ensuring a major flag-waving presence for the first time at the Aero-India show at Bangalore next month. The PC-3 Orion maritime reconnaissance aircraft, the C-130J Hercules transport plane and perhaps, the F-15 Eagle high-performance fighter on display. Defence officials attribute the high-profile US presence to the efforts to sell the Orion to the Navy and Hercules to the Air Force. Together, if they are bought, it would ensure sales amounting to perhaps \$ 2 billion. Currently, no decision has been taken and the presence of the planes is a way of placing the products before the potential buyers. A presentation for the Navy on the Orion has already been arranged here. While the F-15 is not the kind of fighter India is looking for, the presence of such an aircraft is more evidence that the US is serious about being a contender for the 126 fighters India intends to buy for about Rs 43,000 crore. A defence ministry official confirmed the presence of the Orion and the Hercules and said the F-15's presence is being finalised.

The Times of India, 28 January 2005

Promotion case holds up Air Force appointment

NEW DELHI: The country's strategic Western Air Command (WAC), which stretches from Bikaner to Ladakh, has been headless since January 1 because of the ongoing "denial of promotions case" in the Supreme Court. The uncertainty prevailing due to the case has meant that the government is yet to announce a replacement for Air Chief Marshal S P Tyagi, who was the WAC chief before he took over as IAF chief. Air Marshal A K Singh, senior air staff officer of the WAC, is "temporarily in charge" of the crucial command till a formal decision is taken. Incidentally, Air Marshal Singh is one of the four Air Marshals - the others are A D Joshi (Eastern Air Command chief), J S Gujral (IAF deputy chief) and F H Major (deputy chief of integrated defence staff) - whose promotions have been questioned in the court case. The Delhi High Court had in November quashed the promotion of these four officers on petitions filed by Air Vice-Marshal Harish Masand and T S Chhatwal, who were denied promotions by the 2003 special promotion board of the IAF. The case is now being heard by the Supreme Court.

The Times of India, 31 January 2005

May the Force be with you... (Rajat Pandit)

The killer tsunami was silently making its way to the island at a furious pace deep under the ocean. The mobilisation - under Operation Madad for the Indian east coast and Operation Seawaves for the A&N archipelago, apart from operations on foreign shores - was indeed colossal. The IAF, with 10 heavy-lift IL-76 aircraft, 30 AN-32 transport planes, 20 Mi-8 and Mi-17 helicopters, apart from Dorniers and Avros, conducted round-the-clock sorties to evacuate over 16,000 people and airlift nearly 2,000 tonnes of supplies. The Navy deployed 32 ships, 21 helicopters and eight aircraft, along with over 5,500 personnel. The Coast Guard chipped in with 19 ships, while the Army pumped in scores of medical, engineering and other teams. "Our warships, some converted into hospital ships, and aircraft carried almost 750 tonnes of material, apart from rescuing thousands of stranded persons," says a Navy officer.