

The Indian Express, 5 January 2006

Air India looks to IAF for pilots (Lekha Agarwal)

Mumbai, January 4: After signing a historic Rs 35,000-crore deal with Boeing to buy 68 new aircraft, Air India is now busy shopping for pilots to fly them. With 53 pilot vacancies and poaching now a hard task, the Maharaja is turning for help to the Indian Air Force (IAF), the world's fourth largest air force. But the force is itself in bad shape. Two years ago, 10 IAF pilots had joined Air India. A-I denies requesting the air force for a specific number of pilots, but sources said the demand is for around 50, to be met by March. "We will induct as many as the air force is prepared to release, subject to them meeting our requirements," an A-I spokesperson said. "The air force has the maximum trained pilots, who are ready to go into any cockpit," Air Marshal P S Ahluwalia, the air force's chief liaison with A-I, told The Indian Express. "We can be of some assistance as civil aviation is a national asset."

The Pioneer, 5 January 2006

Jet set go! US to pitch hard for aircraft deal (Rahul Datta)

The United States is likely to make a strong pitch for bagging the Rs 20,000 crore contract for 126 multi-role aircraft for the IAF in the next few weeks before President George Bush visits New Delhi. The IAF, meanwhile, is finalizing the request for proposal (RFP) to five contenders, including two from the US and the request is expected to be delivered to them shortly. The five contenders short listed by the IAF include the two US giants - Lockheed Martin, which manufactures F-16s and Boeing (F-18s) - beside Grippen jet of Sweden, Mirage of France and MIG-29 (Russia). Sources said here on Wednesday that the final deal was likely to be inked within six months of completing all the procedures, including technical evaluation and price negotiations. "This procedure normally takes two to three years but given the strategic security scenario in the Indian sub-continent, the Government is keen to acquire the jets to maintain a credible operational balance," sources added. With the US companies making a strong bid for the nearly three billion dollar deal, the race was hotting up and this issue was likely to figure prominently during the US president's visit.

The Pioneer, 11 January 2006

'NAC needed for integrating military & civil flying'

A National Aeronautics Commission is the need of the hour to integrate all aspects of military and civil flying, use of air space and flight safety in view of the booming aviation sector in India, director flight safety Air Marshal PS Ahluwalia said here on Tuesday while outlining the highlights of the forthcoming first ever international flight safety conference here from January 24 to 26. He said the proposed commission would help in the integration of civil and military flying issues in the years to come, adding this integration would comprise information flow of all types like marrying up of civil and military radars. The flight safety chief said such a set up was existing in countries like Russia and UK and the IAF and civil authorities were practising it to some extent in busy sectors like Mumbai-Delhi. Stressing the point that the IAF had considerably improved its flight safety record and reducing the accident rate by 50 per cent in the last few years, the flight safety chief said this rate was achieved by introducing measures like training and other safety measures. He also said the much criticised MIG-21 was one of the safest planes and its flight safety record was good as any other plane in the inventory of the IAF.

The Hindu, 13 January 2006

No move to shift venue of joint exercises: IAF

New Delhi: Despite the massive demonstration outside the Kalaikunda air force base in West Bengal during the joint Indo-U.S. air exercises in November last year, there is no move to shift the venue for similar multinational joint exercises, said Indian Air Force (IAF) officials while noting the absence of protestors when American made F-16s of the Singapore Air Force took part in exercises with IAF fighters earlier this month. Kalaikunda is the second Indian air base with facilities for supporting joint exercises with air forces of advanced countries. Its inauguration ran into a political problem with the Left parties holding a peaceful demonstration to coincide with the joint exercises with the U.S. air force. Though they were taken by "surprise," officials noted the absence of any threat of a confrontation during

the demonstrations. The officials pointed out that the weather around Kalaikunda generally remained excellent throughout the year but for a brief spell of thunderstorms during February-March. In addition, there was little civilian air activity in the area as opposed to heavy passenger air traffic around most of the bases in other parts of India. These two factors made Kalaikunda an excellent place for hosting air forces of "friendly countries."

The Asian Age, 16 January 2006

Plans for new fighter aircraft

Hyderabad, Jan. 15: Even as India moves closer to the production of the first batch of Tejas, the Light Combat Aircraft, the scientific community has begun putting together the concept of a fifth generation fighter aircraft that would be on par with the "best in the world." Mr P.S. Subramanyam, programme director of Combat Aircraft, and director of the Aeronautical Development Agency, Bangalore, told mediapersons that they would present the Centre with a detailed report on the viability of the aircraft. "The concept is being developed. The design will be worked out. By the time we are finished with the LCA we will have a new project, provided the government approves it," he said on the sidelines of Conquest 2006, an international conference on quality and reliability in aerospace systems here. The fifth generation fighter plane, known as the Medium Combat Aircraft, would boost the Indian Air Force's air defence capability. The 12-tonne stealth aircraft would have a twin-engine configuration optimised for strike missions. The project would take 10 years to go through the concept to production stages after approval of the government.

The Tribune, 17 January 2006

Air Chief hopes to get AWACs

Gandhinagar, January 16: Geo-economic issues rather than geo-political ones will influence decision making in the India's Air Force, said Chief of Air Staff S.P.Tyagi here on Monday. Addressing mediapersons after inaugurating a three-day commanders' conference of IAF commanders from the South Western Air Command (SWAC) at Command Headquarters, the Air Chief said rising economic trade and burgeoning energy requirements had created the need for greater exploitation of space and large scale networking in air power planning. Air Chief Tyagi pointed out, "Enhanced reach calls for aircraft with longer range which calls for in-flight refueling abilities which in turn calls for protective cover, so the need for AWACs. We are hopeful of getting AWACs by 2007," he added. Air Chief Tyagi denied that the Indian Air Force was losing pilots to private airlines.

HindustanTimes, 17 January 2006

IAF now guarding growing Indian economy: Tyagi (PTI)

Gandhinagar, January 16, 2006: The growing economy has altered the focus of Indian Air Force which is now concentrating on providing security to economic installations in the country, Chief of Air Staff SP Tyagi said on Monday. "The Indian economy is unstoppable and so we have altered our focus from geo-political issues to geo-economic issues," he told reporters on the sidelines of commanders' conference at South Western Air Command (SWAC) headquarters in Gandhinagar. "Today the concern for economic security has become stronger than political factors," Tyagi said, adding the IAF is now concentrating on providing security for trade and energy installations of the country. "Today trade and energy needs of the country are on the rise. So we need better reach and more exploitation of air space," he said. "It is a whole new ball game." The Air Chief said in the era of globalisation "geographical boundaries known as borders are vanishing and IAF is looking 25 years ahead."

The Asian Age, 17 January 2006

IAF flier to glide around the world in 80 days (Ashwani Talwar)

New Delhi, Jan. 16: Around the world in 80 days. This is what an Indian Air Force pilot is attempting to do on a piston-engine motorised glider. If Wing Commander Rahul Monga, 35, succeeds, he would set a world record for this category of aircraft. There have been only three successful attempts worldwide, the fastest - in 81 days - by Slovenia's Matvez Lenaric in 2004. But even that record was unofficial: it has

not been certified by the aviation sport body, Federation Aeronautique Internationale. The two certified circumnavigation of the globe by motorised gliders have been by a Swiss couple in 121 days and by a Brazilian pilot in 100 days. For much of the 40,000 km trip, Wing Commander Monga will have Squadron Leader S.K. Yadav as a co-pilot. But the riskier stretches - including 4,000 km over the sea - will be flown solo. The co-pilot has to be ditched so that more fuel can be loaded onto the craft. And in Russia, instead of Sqn Ldr Yadav, a Russian navigator would sit in the cockpit with the IAF pilot: local rules demand that. Powered by a single 78 bhp engine, the Super Dimona H36TC glider, on loan from the National Defence Academy, is not meant for such long hauls. At 770 kilos, it weighs about the same as a car. It has a cramped cockpit with a very rudimentary instrument panel. For this trip, though, there would be some add-ons to make sure that a satellite can keep track of it.

The Indian Express, 17 January 2006

Not losing pilots to airlines: IAF (PTI)

Gandhinagar, Jan 16: The Indian Air Force (IAF) chief, Air Marshal S P Tyagi, today denied that private airliners were luring away IAF pilots by offering them attractive salaries. "We are not losing pilots to private airlines," Tyagi said at South Western Air Command (SWAC) headquarters here after inaugurating a three-day commanders conference. Reports of pilots quitting IAF were false, he said, adding, he has not received any request from any IAF pilot to relieve him of service to join a private airline. "The civil aviation industry in India is growing and so there are market forces at play," Tyagi said. "A senior captain of a private airline is paid around Rs five lakh while a junior pilot gets around Rs three lakh," he said about the pay scale of pilots in the private sector. "But during the last one year not many (pilots) have left IAF. We have legal tools to prevent IAF pilots from leaving the force," Tyagi said, adding, pilots will not be allowed to leave "at the cost of the IAF". Though IAF pilots were not bound by any bond, their continuation of service in the force was at the "pleasure of the President of India," Tyagi said.

The Pioneer, 23 January 2006

Supersonic jets set to jazz up R-Day parade

A thrilling flypast by the supersonic jet fighters over Rajpath will form part of the IAF contingent for the Republic Day parade this year. The IAF will also showcase the indigenously produced Prithvi missile and Indra low-level radar, besides the marching group of 144 air warriors led by Squadron Leader K Nachiketa. The parade will commence with one Dhruv Advanced Light Helicopter and three MI-17 helicopters flying past the saluting base carrying the National Flag and showering flowers on the audience. The main flypast at the end of the parade will see one IL-78 mid-air refueller plane feeding oil to two SU-30 fighter jets which will then unplug and pull up sharply in a thrilling manoeuvre. This sortie will be followed by five Jaguars zipping past the saluting dais in an arrowhead formation and another stick of five Jaguar twin seaters performing the same act closely tailed by five MIG-29 jets. Spectators will see one of the most awe-inspiring feat when a SU-30 flies up to the dais and then pulls up and climbs while performing vertical Charlie rolls, an IAF spokesman said. The band contingent will precede the Air Force marching team and it will comprise 72 musicians and two drum majors led by Junior Warrant Officer D Paul. The band will play Sound Barrier while marching past the saluting dais, he said.

The Hindu, 24 January 2006

IAF not to fly 'Dhruv' on R-Day (Sandeep Dikshit)

New Delhi: The Indian Air Force has decided not to fly the indigenously built helicopter "Dhruv" on Republic Day despite getting a safety clearance certificate from its makers, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). Dhruv was supposed to carry the National Flag over the Republic Day Parade here in the Capital but question marks cropped up when the entire fleet was grounded last month after snags were detected in the tail rotors of a particular batch. The move not to fly the Dhruv marks a change in IAF's stand. Immediately after getting the clearance certificate from HAL last week, IAF sources had said Dhruv would fly at the Republic Day celebrations. The IAF now maintains that the certificate has

come too late because it has to carry out additional in-house checks. "We are flying the Dhruv helicopters but they are for testing. We want to satisfy ourselves and we have a set format for internal security clearance. All the parameters are being tested one by one," said an IAF official on Monday. This despite the fact that the testing at HAL was done by pilots sent on deputation from the IAF itself.

The Pioneer, 25 January 2006

IAF told to discard obsolete technology

Union Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee on Tuesday stressed on the need for toning up flight safety and said he had asked the IAF to decommission unreliable technology after systematic analysis of all aspects, including financial and safety factors. He said an Expert Committee was asked in 2004 to identify the root cause of aircraft accidents. The Expert Committee interacted with various directorates of the IAF, certifying and overhauling agencies and original equipment manufacturers. The group identified inadequacies affecting flight safety, the Minister said. "Keeping in view the recommendations of the Expert Committee, several factors need to be addressed through invigoration of the flight safety organization by enhanced interaction levels. These would include evolution of a comprehensive flight safety strategy, risk management through operational risk management and safety audits, identification of vulnerable areas through analytical studies and weak technology," Mr Mukherjee said, speaking on the inaugural day of first ever two-day International Flight Safety Conference in India organised by the IAF.

The Hindu, 27 January 2006

IAF seeks tie-up for safety

New Delhi: The Indian Air Force is seeking international cooperation to improve its safety performance by tying up with friendly air forces that have similar type of aircraft. As awareness and information sharing are the keys to reducing accidents, "we have embarked on a process of signing memorandums of understanding with other air forces operating similar type of aircraft and equipment," said Chief of Air Staff S. P. Tyagi at an international seminar on flight safety. The alliances with other air forces would help further reduce accidents which touched an all-time low of eight crashes in 2005-06 as against 20 per year a couple of years back.

The Pioneer, 31 January 2006

Army, Air Force get Gandhi Service Award (Shivani Khanna)

Jammu and Kashmir Governor SK Sinha, on Monday, presented the Army and the Indian Air Force with the 'Gandhi Service Awards' for their contribution in providing relief and succour to the earthquake victims. The Governor presented the awards to 16 corps Army Commander Lt Gen Sudhir Sharma and Air-Officer-Commander-in-Chief, Western Air Command AK Singh at an impressive function here. J&K Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad was also present on the occasion. While praising the efforts of the Armed Forces in getting life back to normalcy in the quake-hit areas of Kashmir, which were rendered inaccessible after the calamity, Mr Azad said, "had it not been for the Air Force and the Army who led from the front in rescue operations, the number of victims would have been far greater."