

New Kerala, 18 March 2006

Pilotless aircraft 'Lakshya' successfully test flown

Balasore: The indigenously built Pilotless Target Aircraft (PTA) 'Lakshya' was successfully test flown at around 11 a.m. from the Integrated Test Range (ITR) Chandipur, near Balasore today. Indian Air Force (IAF) test fired the short range missile successfully, said the Defence sources. Lakshya is equipped with advanced support system to help it perform tactful aerial exploration in the battlefield, including target acquisition. The six-foot long Lakshya is fitted with a digitally controlled engine that can be operated from the ground using a remote. 'Lakshya' had been designed by Aeronautical Developmental Establishment, Bangalore. Lakshya is a surface/ship launched high subsonic reusable aerial target system, remotely piloted from ground. It provides training to the gun and missile crew and to air defense pilots for weapon engagement. India is also developing it as an air or land-launched variant cruise missile system capable of carrying a 350 kg payload to a range of 600 kms.

DailyIndia.com, 19 March 2006

Turf battles hit Indian spy in the sky

DailyIndia.com, March 20, 2006 Turf battles hit Indian spy in the sky New Delhi: Bureaucratic wrangling and turf battles between India's civilian and military intelligence agencies, exacerbated by budgetary squabbles, continue to hamper efforts to modernise the country's shadowy and highly classified Aviation Research Centre (ARC). Run by the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), India's external intelligence agency that reports directly to the prime minister, ARC is responsible for communication and electronic surveillance along the borders with Pakistan and China. ARC inputs constitute the bulk of the monthly intelligence forecasts to the Indian military, particularly the army, on the Pakistani and Chinese military's order of battle and tables of organisation. Its responsibilities also include detailing the neighbours' immediate military capabilities, organizational structure, mission essential personnel and present equipment deployment. But turf battles between the civilian and military intelligence agencies, which had intensified following feeble attempts to revamp the country's information gathering capabilities five years ago, rarely lead to close cooperation or information sharing between RAW and the military, intelligence sources said.

The Times of India, 20 March 2006

Russia hardsells MiGs to IAF

The Times of India, March 20, 2006 Russia hardsells MiGs to IAF NEW DELHI: Young IAF pilots prefer Mirages over F-16s. But the Mirage assembly lines are now being shut down. Though French defence minister Michele Alliot-Marie told her Indian counterpart Pranab Mukherjee last month that the lines could be kept open if India gave "firm indications", France itself is pushing the Rafale now. "If not the much-cheaper Mirage, go for Rafale. At more than \$70 million per jet, Rafale is no doubt very expensive but it's of the latest generation and packs a mean punch. If not 126, we can go in for a lesser number of Rafales," says a Wing Commander. But what about the American jets? The US is even promising spin-offs from its F-35 Joint Strike Fighter and FA-22 Raptor programmes, as also the AESA radars, in the deal. Pilots do not seem too keen on F-16s, which they say haven't fared too well either "across the border" or in joint exercises with India.