

The Times of India, 1 October 2004

IAF's base in Tajikistan will be ready by '04 (Mahendra Ved)

NEW DELHI: India's first-ever military outpost on foreign soil, located at Farkhor, about 10 km outside Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe, is ready to become operational by this year-end, without any fanfare. Reliable sources in the government say the Indian Air Force (IAF) is pressing for an early decision on a suitable aircraft to be stationed at this military base. Operational requirements stipulate at least two squadrons to be stationed there. Logically, experts say, IAF could opt for MiG-29s that are already in its inventory and can be flown in and out of the region. Although Indian officials are not willing to discuss the importance of the Farkhor military base, foreign analysts have noted that the acquisition of the military base in Tajikistan would certainly give the Indian armed forces a longer strategic reach.

The base is the outcome of considerable behind-the-scenes work by the MEA, clinched after the US, which marked a big military presence in Central Asia in the wake of 9/11, preferred not to establish a base. Work by then defence minister George Fernandes led to a bilateral agreement being signed in 2002 during then PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit to Tajikistan. Even before 9/11, Tajik President Emamoli Rakhmanov has been visiting India. The two countries share common security threat perceptions. Although Russia's 82nd Motorised Division guards the Tajik border with Afghanistan, the bilateral agreement stipulates the presence of both Indian Army and IAF personnel who will also assist in warding off any threat to Tajikistan.

The Hindu, 2 October 2004

First woman Air Marshal (UNI)

NEW DELHI, OCT. 1. Padmavathy Bandhopadhyay today took over as Director-General Medical Service, becoming the Air Force's first woman three-star general officer. Promoted to the IAF's second-highest rank, Air Marshal Bandhopadhyay succeeds Air Marshal P.K. Sarkar, who has retired.

The Tribune, 3 October 2004

Move to revive air surveillance project (Sridhar K Chari)

Bangalore, October 2: With the Cabinet clearing last month the Rs 1,700-crore project to develop an airborne surveillance system, the Centre for Airborne Systems (CABS) in Bangalore is gearing up to revive an effort that tragically came to an end in January, 1999, when its modified HS-748 Avro, with a turning rotodome on top, crashed killing eight persons, including DRDO personnel, Air Force pilots and engineers. DRDO sources told The Tribune that the new project involved the purchase of three Embraer aircraft from Brazil, known as the EMB-145, and the development of an indigenous radar system. Before this deal came through, the Russian IL-76 was also being considered. The purchase of the planes itself would cost Rs 600 crore, while Rs 550 crore has been earmarked for radar development.

The Tribune, 3 October 2004

British Defence Minister to arrive next week (Rajeev Sharma)

New Delhi, October 2: British Defence Minister Geoffrey Hoon will arrive here early next week to further strengthen the strategic partnership between the two countries. Diplomatic sources told The Tribune today that apart from having talks with his Indian counterpart Pranab Mukherjee, Mr Hoon would also meet External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh and call on Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. During his visit, Mr Hoon would push his government's case for the next generation Typhoon fighter aircraft, which was manufactured by a European consortium. India is negotiating with a host of countries on the purchase of the latest fighter aircraft and has dropped enough indications that it is looking beyond the French Mirage 2000-5, an updated version of the Mirage.

The Indian Express, 6 October 2004

After air exercise, Mirage damaged in Mauritius

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 5: An IAF Mirage-2000 fighter was severely damaged on Monday afternoon when its landing gear was lowered too late at an airport in Mauritius, making it the second Mirage accident in less than a fortnight. The pilot is reported to be safe. The IAF said the Mirage would be flight worthy in a week. The damaged fighter was one of the six Mirages on their way home from South Africa where they participated, along with two IAF IL-78M mid-air refuellers, in the Golden Eagle 2004 air exercises with the South African air force. Owing to flying fatigue norms, a stop-over was scheduled at Mauritius on the journey back, where an air demonstration of the Mirages being refuelled by the IL-78M pair was worked out with the Mauritian government through the Ministry of External Affairs. The IAF said the aircraft's underbelly is severely damaged. Eyewitnesses said the pilot lowered the aircraft's landing gear too late, sending the fighter into a skid of over half a kilometre before stopping at the end of a landing strip. A court of inquiry has been set up.

The Tribune, 6 October 2004

Dhruv to star in flypast

New Delhi, October 5: The IAF's newly inducted Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) Dhruv will be seen for the first time as part of the Air Force Day flypast here. The manoeuvres carried out on these helicopters are sure to give the Surya Kirans-the IAF aerobatics team-tough competition. The Sarang display team comprising three ALHs will exhibit a spot of formation flying during the flypast on the Air Force Day on October 8. At the dress rehearsal today, they indulged in the most intricate and daring aerial manoeuvres, often with inches to spare, that made viewers temporarily forget that they were helicopters, not



jets. The flypast, comprising over 50 aircraft, will be led by the Jaguars, which have earned accolades for their participation in the recently-held multinational air exercise, "Co-operative Cope Thunder", in Alaska, and include other top-of-the-line aircraft, including SU-30, MiG-29, MiG-23, Mirage, Mi-35, Mi-17 and even the much-pilloried MiG-21.

The Indian Express, 7 October, 2000

Red tape binds IAF's wings, hints Air chief (Shiv Aroor)

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 6: Air Chief Marshal S. Krishnaswamy today hinted at bureaucratic delays in the acquisition of much-required multi-role fighters as he said that the IAF had "established its requirement" for replenishing its depleted force levels. The IAF chief said that the IAF had Cabinet-cleared 39.5 fighter squadrons though the projected current requirement was 45 squadrons. What Krishnaswamy kept mum about was the fact that even the procurement of 10 additional Mirage 2000H fighters was still to be completed, though, he said, they were expected shortly. The IAF's requirement of 120 Mirage 2000-V fighters to replace the ageing MiG fleet is hanging fire with the Defence Ministry, waiting to be cleared for the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS). While the Air Chief said he hoped the LCA Tejas could be made operational by 2007, he has recommended a mid-term quality review of the Kaveri aero-engine (being developed for the LCA) project to DRDO. After making IL-78M mid-air refuellers fully operational, the IAF plans to begin 'buddy' refuelling between Su-30 fighters by late next year. The process will involve an Su-30 tanker refuelling another through a drogue fuel hose. "We believe there are operational contingencies in which buddy refuelling could be utilised," he said. Some Su-30s are currently being integrated with the required refuelling systems. The IAF has also placed an order for two more Indra-II radars and is working with DRDO to develop a 3D radar system. Krishnaswamy ruled out the immediate possibility of 'true' air exercises with Israel. "Defence deals are okay, but an air exercise in the true sense with Israel may have different connotations," he said.

The Hindu, 7 October 2004

Accident rate down, says Air Chief

NEW DELHI, OCT. 6. The Indian Air Force (IAF) has achieved its lowest-ever accident rate this year, the Chief of the Air Staff, S. Krishnaswamy, told newsmen here today. "At one time we lost as many as 48 aircraft (including helicopters) in a single year. Now we are down to 18 aircraft. It took a lot of effort but I am still not satisfied," he said. The IAF has made improvements in several areas to cut down on most major causes of aircraft crashes - pilot error, technical error, bird-hit and environmental causes. In the area of training, the IAF is enforcing stability of tenure for supervisors and instructors at pilot training squadrons.

The Times of India, 8 October 2004

Su-30MKI vs F-16 in battle of top guns

NEW DELHI: When Indian and US air force top guns streak through the air thousands of feet above Gwalior over the weekend, they will be breaching political as well as sonic barriers. Marking a first in expanded defence relations between the two countries, India and US will be fielding their top fighters, Sukhoi-30MKIs and the latest F-16s respectively. In the rarefied world of cutting edge military aircraft, it doesn't get tougher than this. The political milestone will be no less interesting. IAF pilots were to have flown against F-16s much earlier last year. But protests from Pakistan that Indian pilots should not be allowed to become "familiar" with F-16s had stalled the initiative. Pakistan's concern was that it has F-16s too, and that these are the sword-arm of its now painfully-stretched air force. The PAF was not too happy at the prospect of IAF pilots getting valuable experience of simulated air combat against the vaunted F-16.

New Indian Express, 8 October 2004

Army to carry out 'surgical strikes' to crush N-E militants (PTI)

NEW DELHI: Army plans to carry out surgical strikes against the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) strongholds in thick jungles of lower Assam by the weekend. As a prelude to strikes, advance elements of an almost 3,000 strong brigade level mobilisation have already moved to Boniangoan, Kokarjhar, Dhubri and Gopalpara with major columns expected to be in position by the weekend, army sources said here. Army's "hunt and strike" operations would be against an estimated 200 to 250 NDFB militants suspected to be holed up in the jungles and hamlets in the area. They said the NDFB militants had been found to be acting in tandem with ULFA elements in upper Assam and along with strikes against Bodo militants, operations would also be carried out against ULFA elements in upper Assam. The pattern of army strikes would be to hit suspected bases of NDFB as also to carry out cordon and search and area domination operations.

The Tribune, 8 October 2004

India badly needs fighter aircraft (Editorial)

Heartening that the news about the IAF acquiring more multi-role fighter aircraft in the near future is, the few that are in the pipeline may not be enough to fulfil the needs of the Force. There has been a serious depletion over the years. Fighter aircraft are prohibitively expensive. But that is not the only reason why the IAF has been falling back. Inertia had set in after the Tehelka expose which curtailed defence purchases. Things are now changing slightly but in defence matters one has to plan years - if not decades - ahead. India was also done in by the inordinately long delay in the indigenous LCA programme. Then there was also the problem of too many crashes that the IAF planes suffered over the years. All these drawbacks will have to be taken into account to make sure that the country's defence preparedness is not compromised. Out of the long list, the biggest malaise is politics. Defence acquisitions should not be allowed to get caught in red tape. All other organs of the body politic have been affected by this chronic disease. At least the fighting arm should be given the mandatory immunity shots.

The Hindu, 8 October 2004

New air defence cover for Delhi

NEW DELHI, OCT 7. The Indian Air Force is planning to operate fighter-aircraft from the Hindon air base on the outskirts of Delhi after a gap of seven years in order to provide quicker air defence to the National Capital Region (NCR). With danger of bird-hits having subsided following a campaign in the area to check indiscriminate throwing of refuse, the IAF is planning to move a squadron of interdictor combat aircraft from its base at Ambala in Haryana to Hindon in Ghaziabad district of Uttar Pradesh. The shifting of the interdictor squadron, most probably MiG-21s, from Ambala to Delhi will considerably cut down the reaction time of responding to any danger over the NCR skies. Planes taking off from Ambala take roughly 15 minutes to reach Delhi whereas Hindon is in NCR itself.

The Hindu, 9 October 2004

Stunning aerobatics by ALH mark IAF anniversary celebrations

New Delhi, Oct. 8 (PTI): Breathtaking aerobatics by the indigenous Advanced Light Helicopters and a stunning display of air manoeuvres by jet trainers Surya Kirans, marked the 72nd anniversary of the Indian Air Force today. The Sukho-30MKi, with MiG-29 on either sides, flew at a low altitude, only to surge vertically to disappear in the skies above leaving spectators spellbound. The celebrations this year were particularly memorable as the country observes 50 years of the first Indian, Subroto Mukherjee, taking charge as Air Chief as also the birth centenary of J R D Tata, who pioneered aviation in India. Another highlight of the day was the air warriors parading with the indigenously built INSAS rifles. The Air Force has armed its personnel with the multi-purpose weapon for the first time. Also participating in the parade were the Garud commandos, a unit raised by the IAF to protect its installations. The Garud special task force will soon depart to Congo to protect the assets of the IAF, which is on a UN peace keeping mission there.

The Tribune, 9 October 2004

Air Chief lauds IAF efforts

New Delhi, October 8: Addressing his last Air Force Day parade, the Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal S. Krishnaswamy, today lauded the efforts of the Indian Air Force (IAF) on working hard to transform itself from being a professional force to being an elite one. However, the Air Chief, who demits office at the end of the year, cautioned the force that more needed to be done, especially to rectify the force's 'teeth to tail ratio' where he indicated that the tail was longer. He, however, said they had no intention of going in for a drastic reduction of manpower but were considering other steps, such as some reorganisation moves to increase the professional capabilities of servicemen, and eventually cut down on their strength in the long run. Commending the strides which the IAF had made, specially in the past one year, he singled out the Jaguars fighter aircraft for going halfway across the world to become the first IAF fighters to participate in overseas military exercises. Pointing to the force multipliers, which have been inducted into the force, Air Chief Marshal Krishnaswamy was all praise for the mid-air refueller fleet. "We have carried out mid-air refuelling over 5,000 times without any problems," he noted adding that the fleet had greatly enhanced the force's power-projection capabilities.

The Tribune, 9 October 2004

Helicopter sale: HAL team on Chile visit

New Delhi, October 8: Indications of India getting aggressive about selling its indigenous advanced light helicopters (ALHs) in the international market were available here today, with reports of the Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal S. Krishnaswamy, accompanying a high-level team of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) leaving for Chile late tonight. India is hopeful of striking its first major deal with Chile after successful demonstration of the capabilities of Dhruv (ALH) earlier in the year. The HAL team, which will include the Chief of Air Staff, will hold negotiations with the Chilean Defence authorities on the prospective sale of at least two dozen ALHs to that country.

Central Chronicle, 12 October 2004

IAF, Singapore air force begin joint exercises

NEW DELHI: Six F-16 fighters of the Singapore Air Force today commenced joint exercises with the Indian Air Force-- allowing the IAF an opportunity to practice war manoeuvres along with the F-16s for the first time. The two air forces will for the first time conduct the 'Ankush' defensive offensive air exercises till October 27 in the skies over Gwalior, Kalaikunda (West Bengal) and Pokhran (Rajasthan) in which the IAF has decided to pitch in all aircraft in its inventory -- save the MiG-25s. According to an IAF spokesperson here, the Singapore Air Force have arrived with 6 F-16 fighting falcons, a KC-135R refueller and a C-130 Hercules transporter to conduct the second such exercise this year from Gwalior IAF base. The US Air Force had come to this base in February last with their F-15 Eagles.

The Hindu, 12 October 2004

DRDO, IAF differ on LCA schedule? (Sandeep Dikshit)

NEW DELHI, OCT. 11. The Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) is apparently not amenable to the request by the Indian Air Force (IAF) to accelerate flight-testing of the indigenously-designed engine, Kaveri, for the light combat aircraft (LCA). Highly-placed sources say that while no official letter has been sent to the IAF, the DRDO is unlikely to accede to the suggestion. The Chief of the Air Staff, S. Krishnaswamy, had recently said that though work on developing India's first combat aircraft was "slow," it was "progressing reasonably well." He had suggested that the DRDO conduct a quality review of the project and accelerate flight-testing. Sources said the DRDO feels that the flight-testing timetable should not be tampered with, as compressing the schedule can lead to unforeseen problems. It feels that development of the LCA is the most complex and difficult project it has taken up so far. It will be happy to continue progressing slowly, rather than speed

up things and face difficulties.

The Tribune, 12 October 2004

Lakshya flight-tested successfully

Balalore, October 11: The pilotless target aircraft, Lakshya, was successfully flight tested from the Intermediate Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur, about 14 km from here, today, defence sources said. Lakshya was test flown at 11.53 am. The unmanned aerial vehicle has been designed and developed by the Aeronautical Development Establishment, Bangalore, to perform discreet aerial reconnaissance of battle field and target acquisition. The flight duration of the six feet long micro-light aircraft, which is fitted with a digitally controlled engine, is 30 to 35 minutes and after availing three to four laps it drops down with the help of a parachute.

The Indian Express, 13 October 2004

Air Force loses third Mirage in three weeks (Shiv Aroor)

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 12: The Mirage-2000 H fighter squadrons based in Gwalior are under fire from Air Headquarters after another aircraft crashed this morning during joint exercises with the Singapore Air Force. This was the third Mirage to go down in the last 20 days. The Mirage fleet, considered one of the most reliable arms of the IAF, had until now a high safety record. Since its induction in 1985, only five have been lost - three in the last three weeks. The crash today involved a Mirage trainer, piloted by Wg Cdr Venkatesh and Flt Lt Rangachari. It was ditched after its engine stalled, apparently because of a compressor failure. Preliminary reports indicated that the trainer experienced engine trouble at 18,000 feet. It stalled at 1,800 feet, still four nautical miles away from the Maharajpur runway. The pilots ejected safely.

Hindustan Times, 14 October 2004

Fly high, but safely (Editorial)

The third crash of a Mirage 2000 fighter within a space of weeks is a matter of great concern. But other probable causes, too, need to be examined. The very reliability of the aircraft has encouraged a certain complacency, and even laxity, in maintenance standards in the service. There is also some suspicion that the field stations are not maintaining the documentation of their aircraft as they should. As per the requirements of this sophisticated aircraft, everything that is done to it - its flying time, the parts replaced during periodic checks and so on - are strictly logged. To get in some extra flying, there has been a tendency to underlog the aircraft or, in other words, understate the flying done in a sortie, say, reporting 35 minutes when the actual flight was for 45. But you can't fool the airframe and the engine and the fatigue that builds up will eventually begin to tell on a 20-year-old fighter. There are some larger lessons that need to be learnt as well - the need for much quicker decision-making. The IAF waited for more than a decade for the Advanced Jet Trainer, and in the meantime, it had to use its MiG-21 fleet to fill in as a trainer, resulting in their excessive use. Currently, the Air Force needs to replace its dwindling MiGs, as well as its medium transport aircraft, the AN-32. The decision-making process is on, but it is so interminably slow that it will probably take aircraft falling out of the skies to persuade the government and the Air Force to move with some dispatch.

The Hindu, 18 October 2004

IAF aircraft makes emergency landing

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, OCT. 17 . An Indian Air Force aircraft made an emergency landing in the international airport here this afternoon following a failure in its hydraulic system shortly after it took off from the airport. The 18-member crew was safe, airport officials said. The IL-78, a fuel tanker, which arrived from Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, took off at 11.30 a.m. to Mauritius from the airport here to take part in an IAF exercise. It developed a snag in the left side of the hydraulic system and the pilot sought the assistance of the IAF and airport authorities.

The Indian Express, 20 October 2004

MiG crashes: Inquiry team in Bangalore to find cause (Shiv Aroor)

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 19: The Court of Inquiry investigating the three MiG 2000 crashes last month today visited Bangalore to try and gather information as to why the jets went down. While Air Headquarters has ordered preventive checks on all Mirage fighters after the two planes crashed on September 23 and October 12 and one crash-landed in Mauritius on October 4, the checks are now to be done on all fighters in the IAF's fleet. Sources said the September 23 crash was probably because of a problem with the fastener that held the aircraft's main left wheel to the axle. The possibility of a cracked axle is also being investigated. The Air Force has, meanwhile, denied the possibility of aircraft fatigue and is currently considering a programme to further extend the life of Mirage fleet.

The New Indian Express, 25 October 2004

IAF steers clear of controversy over Mirage deal

NEW DELHI: The Indian Air Force has distanced itself from the controversy over the purchase of 10 Mirage-2000H fighters after a Paris court reportedly announced last week that the deal had been swung through middlemen from Keyser, a Panama-based arms negotiation agency. "The deal is no longer with us. It is under the direct control of the Ministry of Defence, we no more have control over it," IAF sources said. The 10 Mirage-2000H fighters, ordered as replacements for Mirages lost in crashes - the IAF has so far lost five of 49 Mirages it bought in 1985, were initially supposed to arrive early this year. But once the MoD said it wanted the Mirages fitted with the Tactical Air Navigation (TACAN) radar system, manufacturer Dassault Aviation pushed up the price significantly. The MoD has since reverted to its order for the old configuration and the batch of Mirages is expected to arrive before the year is out. The Mirage-2000H, currently the most expensive fighter plane in the IAF's

fleet, is currently flown by two squadrons: Gwalior-based 1 and 7 Squadrons, though the IAF has also done the groundwork to add a third Mirage squadron (9 Squadron) shortly.

Hindustan Times, 26 October 2004

IAF to get multi-role fighters

New Delhi, October 26: The process of acquiring a new multi-role fighter for the Indian Air Force (IAF) has begun. Air Chief Marshal S. Krishnaswamy announced this after the inauguration of the Air Force Commanders Conference by defence minister Pranab Mukherjee in the Capital on Monday. Commanders' conferences of the Army and the Navy also commenced here. At these conferences, the brass of the three services reviews the security scene and the operational preparedness of the forces. "We have provided our qualitative requirements to the government, which has to take a final decision," the Air Chief told mediapersons at the conclusion of the inaugural session. The IAF has conveyed a requirement of over 120 multi-role combat aircraft as replacements for the MiG-21 and MiG-23 fleets. This will be one of the biggest augments of an IAF fleet.

Channel News Asia, 26 October 2004

Indian report on Sukhoi's superiority understandable: Mindef (Asha Popatlal)

SINGAPORE: Singapore has described as sensational a report by an Indian newspaper that India's Sukhoi's had proven to be more than a match for Singapore's F-16s in Exercise Sindex. So India would not need to lose sleep even if Pakistan manages to buy more F-16 fighters from the US, said the newspaper. A spokesman for Singapore's Defence Ministry, responding to media queries, said: "We can understand why the Indian media would come out with a sensational story like this. We are very pleased with the exercise and the performance of the RSAF's pilots and aircraft." The spokesman added: "The RSAF certainly looks forward to future such exercises with the Indian Air Force."



The New Indian Express, 26 October 2004

Maintenance, safety IAF's prime concerns at commander's meet

NEW DELHI: Inundated by questions following air accidents in quick succession last month, the Indian Air Force has pushed maintenance, air safety and power projection to the top of its agenda for the five-day IAF Commanders Conference which began in the capital on Monday. So far, 2004 constitutes its safest year in over three decades. Fresh from claimed successes in air exercises over the last two years with the US (in India and Alaska), South Africa and Singapore, the IAF is also keen to indoctrinate power projection into the IAF's global gameplan. Egged on by the apparent success of the tankers in mock missions, the IAF will also look at making mid-air refuelling of all its fighters a part of the Air Force's operational profile. More frequent air exercises with the air forces of other countries will also be charted out.



Indian Air Force MIG-29 and SU-30 multi-role fighter aircraft fly in formation with two F-16s of the Singapore Air Force during joint exercises in Gwalior. - PTI



A Singapore F-16 flies with IAF aircraft in a formation over the Chambal river during the ongoing Indo-Singapore exercise in Gwalior on Saturday. - IAF/PTI

The Hindu, 27 October 2004

Dassault had middlemen, say court documents (Vaiju Naravane)

PARIS, OCT.26. According to court documents obtained by *The Hindu*, Dassault International and two other French armaments companies had in fact retained the services of a Panamanian company, Keyser Incorporated, to help them obtain contracts for the sale of Mirage 2000 jets to India. Dassault has always denied employing middlemen in prospecting for defence contracts with India. The judgment, handed down on September 11, 2002, by the Tribunal de Commerce de Paris, also indicates that the Indian Government was not aware of the hiring of middlemen by Dassault. The court rejected Keyser's claim of a tacit renewal on the grounds that meetings, exchange of faxes and other correspondence between them continued as before. The court called upon Keyser to return to Dassault with interest the \$100,000 advance it had received against an

eventual commission, payable only if their agreement was still in force when the contract for the sale came through. Asked to comment on reports alleging the use of middlemen by Dassault, India's Ambassador to Paris, Dilip Lahiri, told *The Hindu* : "The reports appearing in the Indian press are factually totally incorrect. The court has dismissed the claims of the Panamanian company as being without basis and has asked it to return the advance of \$100,000 it was paid." In recent years, the norms in India for defence procurement contracts have been tightened to exclude middlemen and the payment of commissions. In the light of this, Dassault's hiring of middlemen, even for a fruitless, intermediary period, could jeopardise future offers.

The Indian Express, 28 October 2004

Govt clears Mirage delivery, question mark over 124 more (Shishir Gupta)



10 of these will soon be here

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 27: The Government has given the IAF the go-ahead to take delivery of 10 Mirage 2000-H fighters next month but has put a question mark on the proposal to purchase another 124 Mirage 2000-5 fighters. In the wake of a controversy over the 350 million dollar Mirage 2000-H deal, the Government wants the IAF to consider other fighters instead of concentrating only on the 2000-5 Mirage variant. It's learnt that Air Headquarters will be asked to project its "air staff requirement" after which there are plans to float a global tender. The Mirage deal - the 10 aircraft are primarily replacements for aircraft that have gone down - was shrouded in controversy after Panama-based Keyser Incorporated took Dassault Aviation to a Paris court, seeking "commission" for the contract with India signed on September 19, 2002. Keyser withdrew its case from the appellate court on September 2, 2004 after losing the case in the lower court in 2002. The IAF is now preparing a list of pilots to bring home the 10 aircraft from Biarritz in France by November 15.

The Hindu, 28 October 2004

French Minister declines comment on controversy

NEW DELHI, OCT. 27. The French Foreign Minister, Michel Barnier, today declined to comment on the employment of middlemen by Dassault International on the ground that the courts were still hearing the case. Also, the Indian authorities had "clearly stated the position." While admitting that the French Government normally backed its companies on armament deals, he said it was not privy to the discussions that took place between the French businessmen and Indian authorities.



The New Indian Express, 29 October 2004

Mirages on their way but we will seek an undertaking: Pranab

NEW DELHI: In his first reaction to the controversy surrounding French company Dassault Aviation's delivery of Mirage fighters to India, Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee said on Thursday that while the 2002 contract would be fulfilled, the Government might require some "guarantee statement" from the firm. Speaking exclusively to this newspaper, the Defence Minister said: "There is a limited issue here. The Indian contract was signed after the other contract (between Dassault and Panamanian entity Keyser Incorporated) was terminated. Our contract will have to be fulfilled otherwise it will pose problems. But we will now have to be doubly assured and we will require some sort of guarantee statement that they (Dassault) will not indulge in this sort of activity."

Channel News Asia, 29 October 2004

Airbase in Jaipur earmarked for RSAF training: Indian official (S Ramesh)

SINGAPORE : An airbase in Jaipur, in northern India, has been earmarked for the Republic of Singapore Air Force to carry out its flight training and exercises. Senior Indian air force official, Air Commodore Rajaguru, says the airbase is a good beginning for more interaction between the two air forces. Although this is not a permanent facility for the RSAF, the senior official says it can train there on a regularly basis. Singapore and India are now conducting their first joint air exercise, code named SINDEXT 04, at Gwalior, India. Previously, defence cooperation between the two countries involved mostly their navies.

The Indian Express, 29 October 2004

Mirages and phobias (Editorial)

Fear of scams through commission agents has hurt our defence modernisation and capability seriously - and perhaps irreversibly. The process has left a 20-year backlog which would require much greater resources to fill since it has telescoped into normal replacements due in future. The purchase of 10 Mirage 2000 aircraft, needed to make up for peacetime attrition, has been pending for long - for far too long, in fact. The delay has extracted a cost in terms of the combat capability of the Indian Air Force. The decision makers, by renegeing on their responsibility to manage procurement efficiently because of a fear of falling victim to scam-hunters, has allowed the force level to drop because no replacements had been authorised in time. The country has grappled with the problem of middlemen and agents in defence deals for nearly two decades now, without really being able to come up with a credible and feasible solution. This is because the government had adopted a policy, since the mid-1980s, mandating that there will be no middlemen in defence procurement. This is patently unworkable and has also left the manufacturer with a leverage in virtually dictating its terms, especially if - as happens so often in a world of shrinking defence industry - we have to settle for a single vendor. Any additional Mirage 2000 that we need can only be bought from France. What we should be looking at is how to leverage the process to our advantage since the arms manufacturers now have to sell to survive. For example, joint production and sales arrangements that strengthen the country's economy and industrial capacity should be a critical factor in the procurement of weapons and equipment.