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IAF's 87th Anniversary

(M E S S A G E S)

IT gives me immense pleasure that the Indian Air Force (IAF) is celebrating its 87th Anniversary on 08th Oct, 2019. I extend my felicitations and best wishes to all officers, Airmen, DSC personnel, NCs(E), civilians and their families on this occasion.

The increasing demands on the Indian Air Force due to the current geopolitical situation have witnessed its personnel setting standards worth emulation in operational capability and devotion to duty. The impeccable record of the Indian Air Force reflects the professionalism and the dedication of its personnel. This was evident during the meticulously planned and precisely executed air strike carried out by the IAF on the terrorist camp at Balakot in retaliation to the gruesome act of terrorism inflicted upon our CRPF soldiers at Pulwama. I am confident that given the present state of its operational preparedness, the IAF can effectively meet any challenge posed to our national security.

The prevailing security scenario requires the IAF to be technologically advanced so as to maintain a combat edge over India's adversaries. The Government is fully committed towards the modernisation and enhancement of IAF's capabilities so as to enable it to effectively meet the challenges of the future.

I wish the Indian Air Force continued success and glory and hope that each and every member of the Force will continue to work with continued vigour in the service of the Nation.

"Jai Hind"



RAJNATH SINGH
Defence Minister of India

ON the occasion of the 87th Anniversary of the Indian Air Force, I extend my felicitations to all Air Warriors, NCs(E), DSC personnel, Civilians and their families. My special greetings to our esteemed Air Veterans and their families.

The Air Force Day is a momentous occasion to celebrate our achievements and commitment to the Nation. It is also an occasion to rededicate ourselves to the service of the nation and take a pledge to take the IAF to greater heights.

I begin by paying tribute to all the personnel we lost while they were executing their tasks last year. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the personnel who made the supreme sacrifice and lost their lives in the line of duty.

In the years gone by, we have achieved a number of operational successes and professional milestones. The conduct of Exercise Vayu Shakti, which was a Fire Power Demonstration at the Pokhran Range, aptly showcased the operational capability and readiness of the IAF.

The IAF further expanded its participation in bilateral/multi-national exercises with Air Forces of friendly foreign countries, demonstrating to the world our growing strategic reach. These exercises have increased camaraderie and mutually benefitted participating nations.

Our Air Maintenance efforts for the Indian Army, Para-military organisations and Central Armed Police Forces have been achieved as committed. Towards the Anti Naxal Operations, Op Triveni, our six deployed helicopters have provided 24x7 support to the paramilitary forces, flying over 1,468 sorties and transporting 6,750 troops, 55 casualties and 19 mortal remains in the last one year.

The operational aspects of the past one year need no mention as the Balakot strike on 26 Feb, 2019 has been a much-talked-about event in the media. The strategic relevance of this is the resolve of the political leadership to punish the perpetrators of terrorism and the capability of IAF to execute a strike inside Pakistan. This has been a major shift in the Govt's way of handling terrorist attacks. We must always be ready to respond to any contingency. To ensure operational success in all future operations, we need to maintain a high serviceability of combat equipment and exceptional training standards.

The IAF has always encouraged indigenous acquisition of aircraft, radars, missiles and other aviation equipment in consonance with the 'Make in India' initiative to achieve self-reliance and to reduce dependency on Foreign OEMs. Towards maintenance of our legacy equipment, we must proactively promote indigenisation.

The present security environment in our neighbourhood is a serious cause for concern. The recent Pulwama incident is a stark reminder of the persistent threat to Defence Installations. While the physical security of all our assets is of paramount importance, I also expect air warriors to pay particular attention to the security of our information and cyber networks.

Wars are fought through the collective efforts of each and every personnel. We thus must nurture our most important resource which are our personnel. I would like to assure you that the IAF is fully committed in its endeavour to provide a conducive working environment to one and all. A number of developmental projects on construction/upgradation of accommodation, messes, schools, auditoriums, sports infrastructure, medical and recreation facilities have been accelerated to enhance the quality of life and standards of living of our personnel.

On this occasion I take the opportunity to pay tributes to our veterans and acknowledge their outstanding contributions.

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL R. K. S. BHADOURIA
PVSM AVSM VM ADC



Rafale to enhance India's operational capability against Pakistan, China

India will take delivery of its first Rafale aircraft on October 8 even as the IAF celebrates its 87th Air Force Day on the day. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will receive the aircraft at a ceremony in France



THE acquisition of the Rafale aircraft will greatly enhance India's operational capability, Indian Air Force's newly appointed chief, Air Chief Marshal Rakesh Kumar Singh Bhadauria said on October 4, just four days ahead of the 87th Air Force Day celebrations on October 8.

As IAF celebrates the occasion, India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will symbolically take delivery the same day of the first of the 36 aircraft India bought from France in a ₹58,000-crore deal in 2016, in Bordeaux in France.

India is seeking to boost its capability through Rafale to primarily counter Pakistan's F-16s and China's J-20 fighters. The need for such a boost in capability was felt after a risk analysis that the IAF conducted. But that analysis is already two decades old, and the time has come to revise the analysis.

Rajnath Singh will be in France on October 8 and 9 in a bilateral visit that is expected to expand the two nation's defence ties. The first Rafale handover by France during the defence minister's visit is indicative of the enhancement in the special relationship that the two countries already have.

However, after taking delivery, India will not immediately fly the single Rafale to India. It will wait for Dassault Aviation to hand over three more Rafales before these are flown into India sometime in the second half of May 2020, Bhadauria said.

Meanwhile, Indian Air Force pilots will get training to operate the India-specific Rafale while in France. By the time the aircraft arrives in India, the pilots would be fully trained to fly the aircraft in the Indian skies.

One important takeaway from what the IAF chief wanted to convey at his press conference was that there was no proposal under consideration for buying an additional 36 aircraft, as is being reported frequently in the Indian media. At least, no such proposal is being considered at the IAF headquarters as yet.

India has also sent teams to France to help Dassault Aviation to manufacture the Rafales with India-specific enhancements that have been agreed upon. The India-specific enhancements will include Israeli helmet-mounted display, radar warning receivers, low-band jammers, 10-hour flight data recording, infra-red search and tracking system, among others.

India has already spent ₹400 crore on infrastructure such as hangars and maintenance facilities at the airbases



Air Chief Marshal Rakesh Kumar Singh Bhadauria taking over as the 26th Chief of the Air Staff at Air HQ Vayu Bhavan in New Delhi.(PTI)



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in Ambala, Haryana and Hashmara, West Bengal for stationing the two Rafale squadrons, respectively. In anticipation of the arrival of the Rafales, India has resurrected the 17 Squadron at Ambala, to be commanded by Group Captain Harkirat Singh.

The 17 Squadron will now be equipped with the Rafale aircraft when it arrives in India next year. The 17 Squadron was raised on October 1 in 1951 under the command of Flight Lieutenant DL Springett and was then

equipped with Harvard-II B aircraft. By Nov 1955, the squadron converted fully to De Havilland Vampire and by 1957, Hawker Hunter aircraft were flown by the 'Golden Arrows'. The squadron converted to the MiG-21 M in 1975.

The squadron actively participated in the Goa Liberation Campaign in December 1961 and in 1965 operations against Pakistan as a reserve force. Under the command of Wing Commander N. Chatrath, the 17 Squadron took part in the Indo-Pak war of 1971 and flew

close air support, counter-air and fighter recce missions, getting numerous gallantry awards.

In November 1988, the squadron was presented the 'Colours' by the then President of India R. Venkataraman. Under the command of then Wing Commander B. S. Dhanoa, who demitted office as the Chief of Air Staff on September 30 this year, the 'Golden Arrows' participated actively in the 1999 Kargil war, christened Operation 'Safed Sagar'.