

Road Map for Future IAF Fighters

VAYU Exclusive Interview with

Air Chief Marshal BS Dhanoa, Chief of the Air Staff

VAYU: *Congratulations on having taken over as Chief of the Air Staff of one of the world's largest and most committed Air Forces. Could you kindly articulate on your major thrust areas for the IAF over the next few years?*

CAS: Strengthening the air defence of our Vital Areas and Vital Points (VAs and VPs) and maintaining a deterrent offensive capability are the IAF's key thrust areas. While the aim is to maintain a combat ready professional Air Force to meet any external threat, enhancing the security of Air Bases, VAs and VPs is also at the apex of our thrust area. Having assessed our vulnerabilities and shortcomings, post the terrorist attack on AF Station Pathankot, we have embarked on a two-pronged approach to further our security against a possible Fidayeen attack on our VAs and VPs. On the one hand we are upgrading Air Field security at all bases by installing high technology Integrated Perimeter Security Systems, while simultaneously commencing specialised training of IAF personnel to counter terrorist attacks. Our aim is to embrace technology and both equip and train existing Air Warriors to effectively detect and thwart any kind of sub-conventional attack on our assets.



VAYU: *The IAF has a proliferation in inventory of its fighters, transport aircraft and helicopter types, which surely creates massive maintenance difficulties. What are the broad plans for reduction of such diversity so as to make their management more effective and cost effective?*

CAS: Though IAF operates diverse aerial and ground assets we have an organised maintenance cadre, from field units to Air HQs, which is responsible for ensuring the

serviceability of all combat and technical support equipment. Our maintenance organisation is robust, time tested, battle hardened, technologically advanced and professionally competent to deal with the diverse platforms operated by IAF. Apart from the maintenance and logistic personnel that directly support combat operations of our five operational commands, the Maintenance Command of IAF plays a significant role in indigenously upgrading and co-producing war fighting equipment. IAF plans to bring more than 95% of our mandatory spares under 'Make in India' by 2027. The Maintenance Directorate at Air HQ ensures the best industry standards and operational logistics philosophies are followed by the IAF.

VAYU: *With the combat aircraft strength of the IAF steadily decreasing owing to obsolescence and attrition, while induction of new aircraft is still some time away, does the IAF plan to keep its MiG-21 variants and MiG-27s in squadron service for much longer?*

CAS: MiG-21 variants of Type 75 (MiG-21bis) and Type 96 (MiG-21M) are slated to be phased out by 2019 and the MiG-27 fleet by 2020. The MiG-21 Bison



By 2019, all MiG-21 variants but the upgraded Bison (seen leading this formation) and the MiG-21UM trainer (bottom left) will be phased out (photo: Angad Singh)