

CNS ADDRESS

COMMISSIONING OF INAS 303

11 MAY 13

1. Hon'ble Raksha Mantri, Commanders-in-Chief, Flag Officers, Commanding Officer INS Hansa, CO of Indian Naval Air Squadron 303, Officers and men on parade, ladies and gentlemen. Firstly, I wish to convey my heartiest congratulations to the naval aviation arm on its Diamond Jubilee and on the occasion of the commissioning of the first MiG-29K fighter squadron, INAS 303.

2. Since inception, Naval Aviation has steadily grown from strength to strength into a potent combat Arm. Beginning with the amphibian Sealand, the Navy's Fleet Air Arm today encompasses modern carrier borne fighters, state-of-the-art long range maritime recce aircraft, airborne early warning and multi-role helicopters capable of anti-submarine and anti-ship operations. Today, we stand poised on the threshold of a yet another new chapter that will justifiably make any Navy proud.

3. The MiG-29K, in a way represents the future of the fleet air arm's combat capabilities. The induction of the aircraft is expected to be a force multiplier for the fleet. The commissioning of the squadron today assumes special significance since 60 years ago, the Navy's aviation arm came into being on this very day with the

simultaneous commissioning of the Fleet Requirement Unit and the first Naval Air Station, INS Garuda at Kochi. The event symbolises yet another golden phase for the Naval Air Arm, since a large number of aircraft are poised for induction in the near future commencing with the potent Long Range Maritime Patrol aircraft, the Boeing P-8I. It needs to be remembered that induction of new and critical capabilities such as MiG 29Ks, is through allocation of significant national resources, sometimes at the cost of other, equally vital and competing priorities. It is therefore the duty of all personnel, in this case, the crew of INAS 303, to ensure that these capabilities are optimally maintained and operated to serve their intended purpose.

4. Many in this audience will recall with pride and nostalgia that, tail-hook operations are not new to the Indian Navy. We had earlier operated the Sea Hawks with distinction from the decks of our first aircraft carrier, the Vikrant. While Sea Harriers, the V/STOL fighters of the Navy too have served us well for so many years, time has come to induct the Navy's first supersonics. With the induction of the MiG-29Ks, the Indian Navy also returns to the tail-hook operations in the 'new mould' with the multi-dimension capabilities of this potent fighter aircraft. The squadron would carry the nickname of 'Black Panthers' and I am sure that the MiG-29Ks will prove to be as agile, graceful and fierce as the Black Panthers are known to be, instilling fear in the hearts of its adversary.

5. On the occasion of commissioning of the first MiG-29K squadron today, I wish it a glorious future and convey my best to the commissioning crew and those who will serve in their wake. We should all resolve to do all that may be necessary to ensure speedy integration of these aircraft with INS Vikramaditya when she joins us later this year.

6. In the end I would once again congratulate all 'naviators' on the occasion of the commissioning of INAS 303 and the Diamond Jubilee of the Naval Air Arm.

7. Shano Varuna. Jai Hind.