

Current Affairs : 30 July 2022

MiG-21s TO BE GROUNDED BY '25, STARTING THIS SEPT

In News:

- A MiG-21 Bison aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) crashed in Barmer, Rajasthan, on July 28th, killing the two pilots aboard the trainer version of the fighter aircraft.

MiG-21 aircraft

History

- The MiG-21 is India's longest-serving fighter plane. It was designed by the Mikoyan-Gurevich Design Bureau (OKB) of the erstwhile Soviet Union.
- The Soviet Union was willing to sell this fighter aircraft to India on extremely favourable terms and even agreed for licensed production by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).
- The 1962 war with China and growing hostility from Pakistan had lent urgency to efforts to rapidly scale up India's military capability.
- India got its first single-engine MiG-21 in 1963, and progressively inducted 874 variants of the Soviet-origin supersonic fighters.
- The plane has seen several updates and modifications since then.

About MiG-21 Bison:

- The MiG-21 Bison is an upgraded version of the MiG-21bis which had been first inducted into service in 1976.
- The MiG-21 FL, which was an older version of the aircraft and which joined service in 1963, had been phased out of IAF in 2013.
- The IAF received the first upgraded MiG-21 Bison in 2001 and the last of these upgraded fighters was received in 2008.

How many MiG-21 Bison aircraft are in IAF?

- There are four squadrons of MiG-21 Bison aircraft currently in service in the IAF with each squadron comprising 16-18 aircraft, including two trainer versions.
- These four squadrons will retire from service, one by one, by the end of 2025.

How many MiG-21 Bison aircraft have crashed recently?

- Over 400 MiG-21 aircraft of the Indian Air Force have crashed in the last 60 years, claiming the lives of over 200 pilots and 60 civilians.
- There have been six MiG-21 Bison crashes in the last 20 months, with five crashes in 2021 and one in 2022.

Why are they still in service?

- The Indian Air Force had to keep MiGs longer in service due to delays in induction of new fighter aircraft.
- Due to delays, the IAF is facing a crunch to maintain a certain squadron strength to guard India's skies.
- Delays in the indigenous Tejas programme, political controversy surrounding the Rafael deal and slow-paced procurement procedure meant that MiGs had to be kept in service longer than usual.

Reasons behind frequent crash of MiG-21 aircraft:

- **Single-engine aircraft** –
 - The MiG-21 is a single engine fighter, and that could also be a cause for some of the crashes.
 - When a single engine fighter jet loses that engine, it needs to be re-started.
 - More often than not it re-lights but it takes a finite amount of time to re-light any engine. Hence, if one is below the minimum height, he/she has to leave the aircraft.
- **Poor engine quality** –
 - MiG-21 has been upgraded dozens of times since its induction into the Indian Air Force.
 - However, despite such upgrades, its engine could not be improved.
 - Most countries including Russia itself have already retired the MiG-21, but India is still using it.
- **Lack of alternatives** –
 - One of the reasons for the large number of crashes of MiG-21 fighter jets is the absence of any other fighter jet in the Air Force for a long time.
 - For a long time no new fighter jets were included in the Air Force, due to which the entire load remained on the MiG-21.
 - In the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s, only supersonic MiG-21 fighter jets were used for pilot training.

- Besides these reasons, high quality spare parts are easily available in the world markets for modern jets as opposed to those for the MiG-21s.

SCO MEET: EAM CALLS FOR ZERO TOLERANCE ON TERROR

In News:

- External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar participated in the meeting of the SCO Council of Foreign Ministers.

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)



- SCO is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation, created in June 2001 in Shanghai (China).
- Founding members included Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
- This organization represents approximately 42% of the world's population, 22% of its land area and 20% of global GDP.

Observers

- Before 2021, SCO had four observer states. This included - Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia.
- In 2021, Iran became a full member and Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Qatar were added as new observer states. Hence, currently, SCO has 6 observer states namely:
 - Afghanistan, Belarus, Mongolia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Qatar.

Significance of SCO

News Summary

Why SCO is important

- ▶ Is seen as an Eastern counter-balance to NATO
- ▶ Enhances security cooperation among members
- ▶ Helps deal with terrorism, particularly IS terrorists
- ▶ Increases economic cooperation in the region
- ▶ China's One Belt and One Road (OBOR) initiative
- ▶ India's push for connectivity with Chabahar port in Iran
- ▶ International North-South Transport Corridor connecting the sub-continent with Central Asian countries

- External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar visited Tashkent (Capital of Uzbekistan) to take part in the meeting of SCO Council of Foreign Ministers.
- The meeting discussed the preparations for the forthcoming

SCO Summit of Heads of State scheduled to be held in Samarkand (Uzbekistan) on 15-16 September 2022.

Key highlights

• India's stand at the meeting

- India welcomed the expansion of the SCO to include Iran next year.
- India pushed for **Chabahar port** to be a conduit for trade to central Asia. It underlined the potential of the port for the SCO's economic future.
 - Chabahar Port is a seaport located in south-eastern Iran, on the Gulf of Oman.
 - This port provides India with better connectivity to Afghanistan and Central Asia bypassing Pakistan.
 - Recently, India and Uzbekistan have agreed to do a pilot container cargo shipment from Tashkent to India.
 - This shipment would use a hybrid land-sea route via Chabahar Port.
- EAM highlighted India's assistance to Afghanistan at the meeting. The humanitarian support includes: wheat, medicines, vaccines and clothing.
- At the meeting, India maintained that zero tolerance for terrorism in all its manifestations is a must.

• China's support for the extension of CPEC into Afghanistan

- Despite India's reservations about involvement of third countries in China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), China reiterated its support for the extension of the same into Afghanistan.
- **Taliban was representing Afghanistan (observer state) at the summit**

- Indian EAM did not have a bilateral meeting with Taliban acting foreign minister, unlike his Chinese and Pakistan counterparts.
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MiG-21 AIRCRAFT CRASH

A MiG-21 Bison aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) crashed in Barmer, Rajasthan, on July 28, killing the two pilots aboard the trainer version of the fighter aircraft.



How many MiG-21 aircraft have crashed recently?

- There have been six MiG-21 Bison crashes in the last two 20 months, with five crashes in 2021 and one in 2022. Five pilots have lost their lives in these crashes. However, this is the first fatal trainer aircraft crash of the MiG-21 Bison in a long time.

How many MiG-21 Bison aircraft are in IAF?

- There are four squadrons of MiG-21 Bison aircraft currently in service in the IAF with each squadron comprising 16-18 aircraft, including two trainer versions. Out of these one squadron, Srinagar-based No 51 Squadron, is going to be retired from service or ‘number plated’ in IAF jargon on September 30 this year, leaving three squadrons in service.
 - Out of these three squadrons, one will be number plated each year and, thus, MiG-21 Bison will be phased out of IAF by 2025. The IAF is looking towards reviving these squadrons back into service with the indigenous Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas.
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GLOBAL TIGER DAY 2022

Union Minister of Environment attended the Global Tiger Day 2022 Celebrations held at Chandrapur Forest Academy, Maharashtra. He visited Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR), Maharashtra and appreciated the diversity of the landscape.



About:

- He said that the Government of India has demonstrated its commitment to tiger conservation by increasing number of tiger reserves from initial nine in 1973 to the current 52, the latest being Ramgarh Vishdhari in Rajasthan.
- The declaration to celebrate Global Tiger Day was taken on 29th July 2010 at St Petersburg in order to bring all tiger range countries together for increased thrust on tiger conservation.

NEW NORMS FOR MISSION VATSALYA

Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing a centrally sponsored scheme through State/UT Governments namely Mission Vatsalya.



About:

- Under it, a monthly grant of Rs. 4000/- per child is provided for family based non-institutional care including Sponsorship (kinship) or Foster Care or After Care.
- The Mission Vatsalya in partnership with States and Districts provides support to a 24x7 helpline service for children as defined under the JJ Act, 2015.
- The Mission Vatsalya Scheme envisages setting up Cradle Baby Reception Centres in at least one Specialized Adoption Agency (SAA), preferably government run, in each District, to save the abandoned children and look after them with due care and affection till he/she is given in adoption.