

Upgraded MiG-29 adds to air power

The fighter plane now has the capability to take off vertically, giving a shot in the arm for the IAF

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ADAMPUR (JALANDHAR)

The Indian Air Force's beast – MiG-29 – has gained in strength and ferocity after an upgrade, giving the force, battling a shortage of fighter aircraft, a much-needed boost, according to officials.

The Russian-origin aircraft, now capable of effecting mid-air refuelling, is compatible with latest missiles and can launch multi-dimensional attacks, Flight Lieutenant Karan Kohli, who is deployed at the Adampur Air Force Station, said.

Critical role

Even in the previous 'legacy version', the aircraft played an important role as the IAF stamped its supremacy over the Pakistani force during the Kargil War of 1999.

Last week, the upgraded MiG-29 showcased its combat capabilities at Adampur. The country will celebrate the Air Force Day on October 8.

"With the upgrade, as

MiG reloaded

A look at the refurbished MiG-29 aircraft's new features

- Mid-air refuelling facility that increases its range
- Ability to launch latest missiles and multi-dimensional attacks
- Capability to take off vertically
- Take off possible within 5 minutes of spotting a hostile jet
- Glass cockpit with 'Multi-Functional Display' screens



With the upgraded version, the range of aircraft has improved a lot. Moreover, in the legacy aircraft, we were restricted to the certain dimension, but we can now do air-to-air, air-to-ground and anti-ship operations

A MiG PILOT

compared to the previous 'legacy version' of the MiG-29 bought under emergency clause in early 1980s, the fighter jets are capable to give a befitting response," said an official, requesting anonymity, when asked about any possible two-front war with China and Pakistan.

Flt. Lt. Kohli said the upgraded MiG-29 also had Mul-

ti-Functional Display (MFD) screen.

On September 12, IAF chief, Air Chief Marshal B.S. Dhanoa, had said the force was reeling under a severe shortage of fighter aircraft. He had said the force currently had 31 squadrons of fighter jets against the sanctioned strength of 42 squadrons.

"Even when we do have 42 squadrons, we will be below the combined numbers of two of our regional adversaries," he had said.

The strategically important Adampur Air Force Station, which is around 100 km from Pakistan and 250 km away from China borders, is now equipped with upgraded MiG-29.

The IAF has three squadrons of MiG-29 fighter jets in operation, two of them at the Adampur Air Force Station. One squadron comprises 16-18 aircraft.

Flt. Lt. Kohli said the force now had a combat aircraft which was flexible and could manoeuvre every situation so that IAF pilots could change their position and strike the enemy.

He said the fighter plane had the capability of taking off vertically, which had "increased the IAF's power a lot."

Quick take off

The upgraded MiG-29 aircraft could take off within five minutes of spotting a hostile jet trying to enter the Indian airspace and destroy it, he said.

"With air-to-air refuelling feature, the upgraded MiG-29 can cover larger distance as compared to the previous aircraft and destroy the enemy," said another IAF officer.