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Ex-Tarang Shakti: Largest Multinational Exercise by IAF

Gp Capt (Dr) DK Pandey

Senior Fellow, Centre for Air Power Studies



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The Indian Air Force is conducting a mega-multilateral exercise that will bring together Air Forces of various countries, thus strengthening military cooperation with them. The Vice Chief of the Air Staff (VCAS) Air Marshal, A. P. Singh, hailed Ex 'Tarang Shakti' as a 'landmark event' in Indian military history. He underscored its uniqueness as an Ex is the most significant and exclusive international air operation ever conducted in the Indian realm; 51 countries were sent invitations, of which 30 countries have agreed to participate, which signifies India's growing friendships and partnerships.¹

The Ex 'Tarang Shakti' will encompass a wide spectrum of aerial tactics and manoeuvres. It would involve aircraft from diverse range of countries including France, Germany, Australia, and Greece and different types of aircraft like Rafale, Typhoon, F-18, and F-16, showcasing the global scale of the event.²

Senior leaders from all exercising Air Forces would be hosted as Distinguished visitors (DV) during both phases of the exercise. The DV day would have various events which would include static displays, expositions and aerial displays as some of the possible events on the distinguished visitors' days. These events would occur on one day in both phases of the Ex. These get-togethers shall give DVs from different contingents a chance to meet and thus foster 'inter contingents relations.

The goal set by India is to develop the country by the year 2047 and to take the bilateral defence ties with friendly foreign countries to the next level. The exercise is a step towards India's embrace of these goals and presents India as a credible defence force and a 'player' towards 'Atmanirbharta' in defence. As part of the programme, India would demonstrate indigenous defence equipment to participants of the participating countries as well as other dignitaries. This would range from Fighter aircraft to helicopters to attack helicopters to air defence systems to air-to-air BVR missiles to ground based radars, etc. During the exercise, a variety of weapon systems, including LCA Tejas, LCH Prachanda, and other weapon systems, designed and manufactured in India would be displayed.³

All the Agniveers, stationed at different bases where this exercise will be held, will actively participate, like other workforce members, as per their trade and deployment in the concerned base, they will also be taking part in the exercise, ensuring their integral role and deep involvement in the significant event.⁴

The multinational exercise "Tarang Shakti" is strategic initiative, planned to be the largest and the most significant air exercise conducted in India with the 10 Air Forces participating with assets, 18 countries coming as observers, one country decision awaited. Earlier in November 1963, an unprecedented global air defence exercise took place. The exercise 'Shiksha' (Sanskrit for 'learning') brought together India, the US, the UK, and Australia air forces in unprecedented collaboration.⁵

Along with India, this makes it a total of 30 countries out of 51 countries that were invited. The exercise is designed to provide the Indian Air Force with the ability to interface with foreign air forces, share best practices, and carry out sophisticated flying operations that are coordinated with one another. The IAF's capabilities will be enhanced and international collaboration will be fostered by Ex Tarang Shakti. The participation of a number of air forces from various countries provides India a golden opportunity to showcase its indigenous military hardware.

To accomplish the slated objectives and highest level of engagement, Ex Tarang Shakti is being carried out in two distinct phases at two different locations.

- (a) Phase 1 of Ex-Tarang Shakti is slated to take place at Air Force Station Sulur, from August 6th to August 14th.
- (b) Phase 2 of the exercise is scheduled at Air Force Station Jodhpur, from August 29th to September 14th.⁶

The participants

The French, German, Spanish, and United Kingdom air Forces would participate in the first phase with their asset.

The international participation in the Ex 'Tarang Shakti' is truly impressive. Six countries have confirmed their participation with assets in the second phase of the exercise. These countries are Australia, Bangladesh, Greece, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States of America.

Few countries are participating in phase 2, as observers. These are Italy, Malaysia, the Philippines, Argentina, Egypt, Vietnam, Cambodia, Chile, Ivory Coast, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Nepal, Oman, Republic of Korea, Tajikistan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Saudi Arabia.

This global interest in Ex-Tarang Shakti is primarily focused on improving the interoperability of the participating air forces, thereby enhancing collaboration and joint operations. India has strong and enduring military cooperation with Russia and Israel but both countries are not going to participate in the exercise.

Significance of the Exercise

Communication and interaction among the participating air forces have been enhanced to ensure efficiency during integrated operations.

Ex-Tarang Shakti, consequently aims to offer the aircrew and ground personnel an exciting and challenging training environment. This approach will be helpful in enhancing the participating nations' understanding of each other and, more crucially, the work accomplished collectively.

The significant features of the exercise are benchmarking to improve individual and joint operational capabilities. The exercise involves sharing best practices and procedures among the participating air forces. In addition, there is a strong focus on airborne networking, a crucial factor that defines the capacity of aerial networking and guarantees connectivity and data exchange.

The Ex-Tarang Shakti is committed to ensuring the success of strategies and procedures through real-time simulation, demonstrating its commitment to continuous improvement and adaptability. Integration of Sensor Data is implemented to support the concept of Enhanced Situational Awareness.

Conclusion

Ex-Tarang Shakti enhances capabilities and fosters bonds of trust, networking, and friendly relations between the participating countries and their air forces, thereby promoting global cooperation. Professionalism will be honed; friendships be consolidated for better productivity.

The Ex-Tarang Shakti will achieve these objectives through the participation of different countries. It will be achieved through the successful completion of intricate operations involving the accomplishment of different missions by the participating countries, thus improving different capabilities simultaneously.

Notes:

¹ “‘Tarang Shakti’, largest multilateral air exercise in India, to be held in 2 phases in Aug-Sept”, The Indian Express, July 27, 2024, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/tarang-shakti-largest-multilateral-air-exercise-in-india-to-be-held-in-2-phases-in-aug-sept-9487571/>. Accessed on August 3, 2024.

² “What is Tarang Shakti, the largest military exercise that India will host?”, The Hindustan Times, July 31, 2024, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/what-is-tarang-shakti-the-largest-military-exercise-that-india-will-host-101722435902901.html>. Accessed on August 3, 2024.

³ “India invites 51 countries for Tarang Shakti 2024 air exercises next week; Russia & Israel won't participate”, The First Post, July 31, 2024, <https://www.firstpost.com/india/india-invites-51-countries-for-tarang-shakti-2024-air-exercises-next-week-russia-israel-wont-participate-13799266.html>. Accessed on August 3, 2024.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Anchit Gupta and Angad Singh, “Diffidence to Strength: Multinational Air Exercises in Indian skies”, #IAF History, August 3, 2024, <https://iafhistory.in/2024/08/03/diffidence-to-strength-multinational-air-exercises-in-indian-skies/>. Accessed on August 5, 2024.

⁶ Ibid (IE).

