

Redesignation of the IAF as the Indian Air and Space Force

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Why in news?

- Interacting with the media, Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria said that changing the name of the Indian Air Force (IAF) to the Indian Air and Space Force would be a positive move.
 - He was answering a question on whether the force should be redesignated as a space force or a separate space force should be raised as in the US.

- He called it a work in progress, indicating that the idea is still being developed.

Space Security

- Space security deals with the abilities of a country to protect its assets in space – such as the hundreds of satellites used for communication and surveillance.
- The space landscape is changing rapidly. Terrestrial politics is casting its shadow on outer space.
- Hence, relevance of space to national security and conventional military operations is increasing day by day.

Need for space security

- Competition in outer space
 - Several recent trends are impacting the security and sustainability of outer space activities. These include:
 - the massive growth in the number and diversity of actors operating in outer space, including governments and the private sector;
 - the proliferation of hazardous space debris; and
 - increasing dependence on outer space in the civilian, government and military sectors.
- Protection of space assets
 - There exists a possibility of intentional tampering with such assets and the associated ground setup, either by state or non-state actors.
 - While there are no specifically deployed weapons in space yet, there are satellites that could be manoeuvred to act as weapons to disable or destroy the space assets of others.
 - The threat to space assets is directly proportional to degree of nation's dependence on the assets.
 - Higher the dependence the greater will be threat.
- Countries developing counter-space capabilities
 - The first successful Chinese anti-satellite (ASAT) test took place in January 2007.
 - China's launch of a rocket from a ship is evidence of growing sophistication of the Chinese military space capabilities.
 - In December 2019, US president announced the creation of US Space force.

Counter-space capabilities of India

- So far, India's approach to outer space can be described as purely civilian. India has been developing its space capabilities for peaceful purposes.
 - It should be noted that, India does not have a declared Space Security Policy.
- However, due to changing landscape, in an effort to deny an adversary advantages, India also started to develop its counter-space capabilities.

Steps taken by Indian Government

- India's first dedicated military satellite was launched only in 2013.

- Under the Mission Shakti, in March 2019, India shot down a live Low-Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite in space thereby showing its deterrence capability in space.
 - This was the first Indian demonstration of anti-satellite (ASAT) capability.
 - With this feat, India became the 4th country in the world to have this capability. The other three countries are U.S, Russia and China.
- The establishment of the new tri-service Defence Space Agency (DSA), based in Bangalore, is an important institutional initiative.
- To promote R&D in this field, government gave its approval for setting up of a new agency called the Defence Space Research Agency (DSRA).
- India conducted war game IndSpaceEx to gain a better understanding of the current and emerging challenges in the space security domain.

News Summary: Proposed redesignation of the IAF as the Indian Air and Space Force

Key highlights of the opinions expressed by Air Chief Marshal

- Natural integration
 - He said that overall requirements of space and integration of space in air power is a natural integration.
- Cited examples of different countries
 - Every country has its own approach. The French have an air and space force.
 - The US has employed a different combination.
 - In December 2019, the then President Donald Trump officially created a force focused on warfare in space – the US Space Force.
 - In December 2022, the US Space Force launched its first foreign command in South Korea.
- In India, it is a work in progress
 - He said that from the point of synergy and core strength, air and space force will be a step in the right direction. But it is a work in progress which is being discussed currently.
 - The IAF is learnt to have made a proposal to the government to formally designate it as an air and space force. This is due to the increasing need of combat integration of the two domains and the needs of future warfare.

Q1) What is IndSpaceEx?

IndSpaceEx was India's first simulated space warfare exercise. It was conducted on July 25 and 26, 2019. The exercise was a "table-top war-game" that involved stakeholders from the military and scientific community. The exercise was held at the Integrated Defence Headquarters (IDH) in New Delhi.

Q2) What is anti-satellite (ASAT)?

Anti-satellite weapons (ASATs) are space weapons that are designed to destroy or disable satellites for tactical or strategic purposes. ASATs can be used to acquire control and disable hostile assets.

Source: [IAF's redesignation as air and space force will be a step in right direction: Air Chief Marshal Bhadauria](#)

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