

(b) Artillery fire by Pakistani troops into Indian territory including base camp in Siachen sector is an ongoing feature. Constant vigil is maintained on the border and all appropriate measures have been taken to thwart any attempt of misadventure on the part of our adversaries.

Purchase of Anti-Tank Guided Missile by China

5499. SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the report appearing in the Hindustan Times dated the 19th March, 2000 that 'China has covertly tried to buy one of US Army's most effective weapons, the Hell fire anti-tank guided missile from Egypt';

(b) if so, the salient features of this missile; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to raise materialising defences to ensure peace and security in the region?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The AGM 114 missile, manufactured by the Lockheed Martin Corporation of the USA is commonly referred to by its NATO code name the "Hellfire". It is an air-to-ground laser guided anti-tank missile with a maximum range of 5000 meters and a minimum range of 300 meters. The missile is capable of a penetration of 900 mm of rolled homogenous armour. The missile is in use, *inter-alia*, with the Israeli, US, Swedish, Egyptian and NATO forces.

(c) Government keeps a close watch on all such developments which have a bearing on national security and appropriate measures are taken from time to time to ensure full defence preparedness to meet the emerging challenges.

Upgradation of MIG-21 Aircraft

5500. SHRI SHATRUGHAN SINHA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the upgradation programme of MIG-21 BiS is well behind schedule;

- (b) whether this aeroplane is also being modified for use by the Navy;
- (c) if so, what are the reasons for the delay; and
- (d) how does the Navy plan to use this aircraft when it has never been used on an aircraft carrier before?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) The modernisation of MIG-21 BiS aircraft involved the complex task of integration of on-board systems of Western, Indian and Russian origin. This task was implemented in stages during the design and development phase. Delays in the programme occurred in the initial stages, due to customs related problems in Russia. In the subsequent stages of integration and flight testing, delays occurred in part due to problems relating to development and supply of Indian systems and integration of some western systems and in part, due to development problems of some Russian systems.

(d) The upgraded MiG-21 BiS aircraft is not being modified for use by the Indian Navy.

Purchase of Aircraft Carrier from Russia

5501. SHRI SHATRUGHAN SINHA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Navy planned to purchase the aircraft carrier "Admiral Gorshkov" and negotiations regarding this are at an advance stage;

(b) whether a team of Naval Officers visited Russia to inspect the aircraft carrier and had declared it unfit for purchase;

(c) whether the likely cost is expected to be more than Rs. 16,000 crores; and

(d) if so, what are Government's views on this?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d) Admiral Gorshkov, an aircraft carrier, was inspected by the Naval officers in the past. The delegations sent for the purpose have recommended acquisition of the aircraft carrier.