

GARUDA AIR EXERCISE 2025

1. Introduction

- **Garuda** is a **bilateral air-combat exercise** between the **Indian Air Force (IAF)** and the **French Air and Space Force (FASF)**.
- The 2025 edition is being held at **Mont-de-Marsan Air Base, France**.
- It reflects the growing **strategic convergence** between India and France in the Indo-Pacific and defence domains.

2. Key Objectives of the Exercise

a. Enhancing Interoperability

- Develop the ability of both air forces to **operate together seamlessly** in multi-domain combat environments.
- Improve **communication protocols**, mission coordination and airspace deconfliction.

b. Strengthening Air-Combat Skills

- Practice **air-to-air engagements**, **beyond-visual-range (BVR)** combat and **close-combat manoeuvres**.
- Simulate complex threats that resemble modern aerial warfare conditions.

c. Refining Air Defence and Strike Capabilities

- Execute **air defence missions**, intercept protocols, and defensive counter-air operations.
- Conduct **joint strike missions** using mixed fighter formations (IAF + French fighters).

d. Tactical Learning & Doctrinal Exchange

- Exchange best practices related to:
 - mission planning
 - threat assessment

- electronic warfare
- pilot training
- operational philosophy of both air forces

3. Indian Assets Participating

a. Fighter Aircraft

- **Six Sukhoi-30MKI** — India's frontline multirole fighters known for manoeuvrability and long-range operations.

b. Support Platforms

- **IL-78 Mid-Air Refueller** – extends aircraft endurance for long missions.
- **C-17 Globemaster-III** – heavy-lift transport aircraft for personnel and equipment movement.

4. French Participation

- **Rafale multirole fighters** and other FASF platforms.
- Advanced avionics and combat systems of the Rafale provide high-end training value for IAF pilots.

5. Operational Activities During the Exercise

a. Simulated Combat Scenarios

- Offensive counter-air and defensive counter-air missions.
- Suppression of enemy air defences (SEAD).
- Large force engagements (LFE).

b. Mid-Air Refuelling & Long-Endurance Missions

- Enhances capability for long-range strike and persistent air presence.

c. Integrated Mission Planning

- Mixed-aircrew planning, execution and debriefing to refine joint operations.

6. Significance for India

a. Boosts Combat Preparedness

- Helps IAF evaluate its fighter performance against Western platforms.
- Provides exposure to advanced NATO-standard tactics.

b. Supports India's Indo-Pacific Strategy

- Strengthens a committed partner (France) in the region's security architecture.
- Enhances India's readiness for multi-national operations.

c. Supports Defence Modernisation

- Facilitates learning on:
 - network-centric warfare
 - electronic warfare
 - air command & control systems

d. Confidence Building & Strategic Signalling

- Sends a message of **joint strategic resolve** amidst evolving regional and global security challenges.

7. Significance for India-France Strategic Partnership

a. Expanding Defence Cooperation

- Complements:
 - Rafale fighter induction
 - Scorpene submarine programme

- Joint space-based surveillance initiatives
- Defence manufacturing collaborations

b. Indo-Pacific Convergence

- France is the **only European power with territories in the Indo-Pacific.**
- Both countries support:
 - rule-based order
 - freedom of navigation
 - maritime security

c. Technology Collaboration

- Opens avenues for cooperation in:
 - aerospace technology
 - UAVs
 - jet engine development
 - missile systems

8. UPSC-Relevant Facts

- **Garuda:** Bilateral air exercise between **India and France.**
- **2025 Venue:** **Mont-de-Marsan Air Base, France.**
- **Indian Deployments:** Sukhoi-30MKI, IL-78, C-17.
- **Focus Areas:**
 - air-to-air combat
 - air defence operations
 - joint strike missions
 - interoperability enhancement

- **Duration:** 16–27 November 2025.
 - Reinforces Indo-Pacific security cooperation and strategic partnership.
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