Army Aviation Corps

Why in news?

The Army Aviation Corps (AAC), the youngest Corps of the Indian Army, celebrated its 35th Corps Day on November 1, 2020.

How did Army Aviation Corps originate?

- The origin of the AAC can be traced back to the raising of the Army Aviation wing of the Royal Air Force in India in 1942.
- Its origin is also linked to the subsequent formation of the first Indian Air Observation Post in August 1947.

What are Air Observation Post units?

- The Air Observation Post units primarily acted as artillery spotters.
- These are the elements that help the artillery in directing the fire and also giving air support to ground forces.
- In the wars of 1965 and 1971, the Air Observation Post helicopters played a key role in the battlefields by flying close to the enemy lines and helping ground assets spot targets.

When did the Corps raise separately?

- The Corps was raised as a separate formation on November 1, 1986.
- The AAC now draws its officers and men from all arms of the Army, including a significant number from the artillery.
- Immediately after raising, the units of the Corps were pressed into action in Operation Pawan by the Indian Peacekeeping Forces.
- Ever since, AAC helicopters have been a vital part of fighting formations in all major conflict scenarios and a life-saving asset in peace times.
- Over the years, the Corps has grown by additions of new units, equipment and ground assets.
- Along with this, its roles and capabilities too have grown.
- In 2019, the President’s Colours were presented to the Army Aviation Corps in a ceremonial parade.

What is the President’s Colours?

- The President's Colours is a ceremonial flag.
- It is awarded to military units or institutions as symbol of their excellence.
- It is awarded to recognize their contributions during war and peace.

What is the role of AAC helicopters?

- Their main roles include reconnaissance, observation, casualty evacuation, essential load drops, combat search and rescue.
- The AAC helicopters also participate in Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations in peace times.
- In some scenarios, Army helicopters can also act as Airborne Command Posts, replacing the ground command posts if needed.
- The Indian Army has further sharpened the AAC edge by adding dedicated aviation units along with the various operational Corps and Command formations.

What helicopters does ACC operate?

- The AAC operates Chetak, Cheetah, Lancer, Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) Dhruv, and ALH Weapon System Integrated (WSI) Rudra.
- Acquisition of new helicopters is in the pipeline, in the backdrop of concerns over the fleet of the ageing Cheetah and Chetak helicopters.
- Initially, AAC operated non-weaponised helicopters and attack helicopters were only with the Air Force.
- But post 2012, the government has allowed induction of weaponised choppers in the AAC.

What is its role in modern day battlefield?

- In the modern-day battle formation, elements like infantry, short and long artillery, armoured formations and Army helicopters are closely linked with each other.
- These use information and data points collected from ground and airborne surveillance assets and satellites.
- Helicopters are a key element of this battlefield, which is going to become even more technology-intensive in the future.

What is its role in counter insurgency-terrorism ops?

- These battle machines can perform both observation/recce and attack functions.
- So, they are an ideal choice for Counter Insurgency and Counter Terrorism (CI-CT) operations to tackle difficult terrains.
- They are also avoiding ground-based threats like Improvised Explosive

Devices and ambushes.
- Having said this, use of air assets in CI-CT operations is always done with caution because of the possibility of collateral damage.

What is needed?

- With the motto Suveg and Sudridh, the youngest corps of the Indian Army is set to further grow in its tactical importance in the battlefield.
- There is a need for a stronger push of modernisation and enhancement of assault capabilities to take further its role of 'force multiplier.'

Source: The Indian Express

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