

{ **PURVANCHAL EXPRESSWAY** } EMERGENCY LANDING EXERCISE

IAF drill: Fighter jets turn expressway into runway

HT Correspondent

letters@htlive.com

LUCKNOW: The roar of jet engines replaced the hum of traffic on Wednesday as the Indian Air Force (IAF) launched a high-stakes, two-day emergency landing exercise on the Purvanchal Expressway in UP's Sultanpur.

The drill, designed to test the military's ability to use national infrastructure as alternative runways during conflict, saw frontline aircraft operating just feet above the asphalt.

It began with a C-295 transport aircraft making the first landing on the 3.2-km emergency landing facility on the expressway. Over the hours, Jaguar fighters followed with take-offs, while Sukhoi-30 MKI and Mirage-2000 jets executed repeated landing and take-off runs, simulating wartime dispersal and rapid turnaround.



An Indian Air Force (IAF) Airbus C-295 lands on the Purvanchal Expressway airstrip during a two-day air exercise launched by the IAF, in Sultanpur, Uttar Pradesh.

PTI

An Mi-17 V5 helicopter inserted commandos as part of a mock operation, while an AN-32 aircraft carried out "touch-and-go" manoeuvres. Officials said the exercise was aimed at testing the feasibility of using highways as alternative runways during emergencies.

UP minister Om Prakash

Rajbhar said such drills help assess the preparedness of the armed forces and ensure swift action in emergency situations. He added that elaborate arrangements were made by the administration to ensure the event was conducted safely and smoothly.

"The operational versatility of the IAF was demonstrated

through the operations by a diverse fleet of aircraft, including Jaguar, Mirage-2000, Su-30 MKI, C-295 and AN-32, alongside the Mi-17 V5 helicopter and the Garud Commando team," said a senior IAF official, according to a PTI report.

A five-kilometre stretch of the expressway was sealed for the drill, with security tightened and traffic diverted. Large crowds gathered at designated points to witness the aerial operations.

The exercise will continue in phases, with an evening session scheduled without public access. A similar drill was conducted on the expressway in 2023. The 341-km Purvanchal Expressway, linking Lucknow to Ghazipur, was inaugurated in November 2021 and is among the few highways in the country equipped with an emergency landing strip for fighter aircraft operations.