

# The HAL-Dornier 228



*One of the first German-built Dornier 228 light transport aircraft of Vayudoot Airlines*

## India's own light transport aircraft

The Dornier 228 represented the new generation of commuter and utility aircraft, incorporating advanced technology in design, manufacture and potential for future growth. Conforming to FAR 23 Part 135 Appendix 'A' regulations for commuter operations, the 19-seater Dornier 228-200 series had the twin, and normally not available together, advantages of STOL performance in hot-and-high conditions as well as high cruise speed and long range, all at unusually low operating costs. This would make the aircraft extremely versatile and cost-effective for Vayudoot which could operate the aircraft with flexibility and reliability from a variety of airfields including semi-prepared airstrips in difficult terrain. With its operating costs some one-third of those of competitive aircraft, Vayudoot could plan economic returns on new and unknown sectors.

For the defence services, the Dornier 228 provided equal versatility combining excellent field performance with good payload-range and long endurance, apart

from the savings in fuel and maintenance costs owing to its rugged design features.

For Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, the Dornier 228 represented the opportunity to finally participate in the LTA programme it had set out for five years earlier. In the comprehensive transfer-of-technology contract, Dornier would assist HAL in establishing production facilities for the aircraft, its powerplants, avionics and accessories, jointly develop special variants of the aircraft to meet the multifarious—and not always compatible—requirements of various operators and, in a phased manner, evolve growth versions of the aircraft to meet future requirements.

HAL's Kanpur Division was selected to manufacture the airframe, including the wing of new technology, and composite materials for its structure while the Garrett TPE 331 turboprop engines would be built at the Bangalore Division and accessories/avionics at HAL Lucknow/Hyderabad Divisions. Indian operators would take advantage of various developmental benefits that an aircraft of the Dornier 228 at the beginning of its career offered.

That the HAL-built Dornier 228 was intended not only to be a fully-indigenous aircraft but on which future transport Aircraft designs are based, was revealed from the Government's comprehensive planning where even raw material for the airframe, accessories and engines would be locally sourced. That, plus the programme for export of HAL-built 228s to a large exclusive marketing territory, was a major step towards fulfilment of the national policy for self-reliance in the aeronautical field.

### Vayudoot is born and airborne

Meanwhile, Vayudoot was airborne, having inaugurated its air services with some fanfare on 26 January 1981 with a leased Fokker F-27 of Indian Airlines on the short hop from Gauhati to Barapani (in the foothills of Shillong).

Vayudoot, as a registered company had been founded as the third-level feeder airline in the country only a few days earlier, on 20th January. The objective was "to provide communication to remote areas,