



So near

Aermacchi MB-339NAT jet trainers of the 'Al Fursan' aerobatic demonstration team of the United Arab Emirates Air Force at Dubai Air Show

Vital aspects of the Dubai Air Show (for India)

It is often quipped that “Dubai is the best city in India” and considering that there are a score or more direct flights between various cities in India and the Gulf region every day, the traveller from Delhi/Mumbai/Hyderabad/Bangalore/Cochin/Chandigarh to Dubai/Sharjah/Abu Dhabi can well be forgiven for feeling that way! It takes about the same time from Amritsar to Chennai as from Trivandrum to Dubai and the traveller could well think he had arrived at another city ‘in India’ as he would most likely be greeted in his own language by the taxi driver or hotel manager.

So much for distances. Then the people. There are over a million Indians in the Gulf region, working for a living and repatriating

part of their income to families back at home. Of course, Indians in Dubai (and the other Emirates) work shoulder-to-shoulder with those from other parts of the sub-continent, including Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka in seeming fusion (as also those from the Philippines, Korea, Vietnam and so on, only the latter do not take part in cricket matches)!

So why all this preamble when the article is about the Dubai Air Show? Well, considering the logic of major Indian participation and presence at this event, there was strangely no official representation from India at this biennial world-class Air Show, the mandarins at South Block perhaps believing that it is the ‘other’ Show

at Bahrain which is more vital to Indian interests in promoting hardware, software, technology, goodwill, exports ...

However, those in India’s immediate neighbourhood thought otherwise. Pakistan’s Aeronautical Complex were arguably one of the biggest exhibitors at Dubai Air Show 2017, with a huge stand in the main hall, two aircraft types on static and aerial display, senior officers and men of the Pakistan Air Force conspicuous by their presence in large numbers (possibly flown to Dubai from home country and back the same day, just a couple of hours flight and so saving hotel costs). Flying display by the PAC/CAC JF-17 Thunder was impressive, the example on static display being from