

# First IAF Rafales in India

**O**n 29 July 2020, the first five Dassault Rafales of the Indian Air Force touched down at Air Force Station Ambala, their arrival at 1500 hours meticulously recorded by the Defence Minister himself, having continuously tweeted their progress as they entered Indian airspace some hours earlier.

The five Rafales (two twin-seaters and three single-seaters) led by Gp Capt Harkirat Singh, CO No.17 Squadron IAF had earlier been 'flagged off' from Dassault Aviation's Mérignac facility on 27 July. Present at the airfield were India's Ambassador to France, Mr Jawed Ashraf, and the Indian Air Attache at the Embassy, Air Commodore Hilal Ahmad Rather, who had been shown the aircraft personally by



Mr. Eric Trappier, Chairman and CEO of Dassault Aviation (*in photo*). Mr Trappier expressed his admiration at the “amazing efficiency and determination of the IAF and Indian MoD, despite the unprecedented world health crisis, to master rapidly all aspects of the Rafale”.

Continuing, Mr Trappier referred to the “exemplary cooperation between Dassault Aviation and the Indian Air Force, which began in 1953 and reasserts our total commitment to fulfill Indian Air Force requirements for the decades to come, and to be part of India’s ambitious vision for the future”.

Taking off on their near 8,500 km flight from Mérignac to Ambala, in the first stage the five IAF Rafales flew 5,800 km in 7½ hours to Al Dhafra air base in