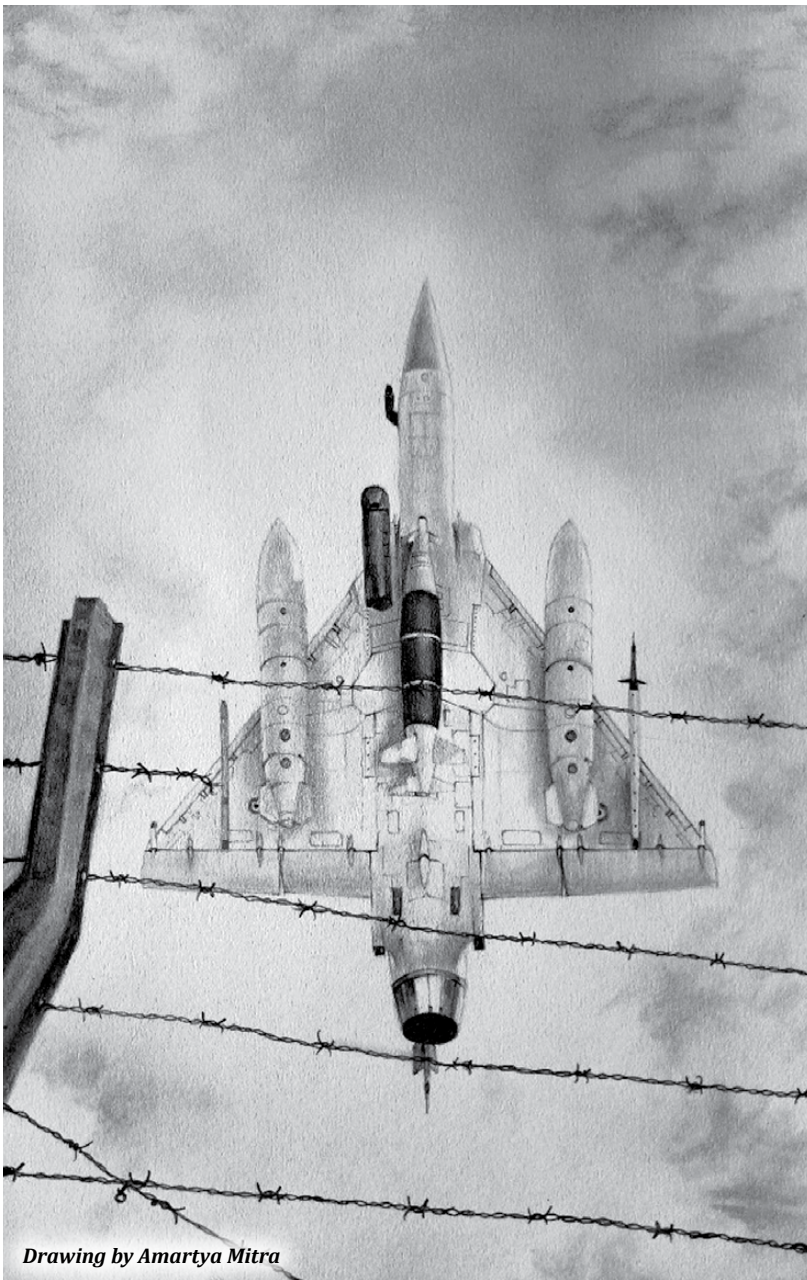


Air Marshal (R) Brijesh Jayal writes on how we are

“Strangling ourselves with our own systems’

With China having violated various agreements towards maintaining peace and tranquility along the LAC along with associated confidence building measures, it is perhaps time for us to reflect on why we find ourselves at the receiving end of their offensive action yet again, having similarly been deceived in 1962.



Drawing by Amartya Mitra

One area of weakness that must tempt China to take liberties is our perennial under-equipping and modernising of the armed forces driven by an over-cautious and unresponsive defence procurement mindset. What better indication of this than the flurry of activity towards making good equipment deficiencies once the militaries are face-to-face across the LAC? Convening of an emergency meeting of the Defence Acquisition Council and announcing approval of purchase of weapons and ammunition worth Rs 38,900 crore in which were included 33 new (some second-hand) fighters for the IAF as also authorisation for the Armed Forces Headquarters to process cases for buying urgently-needed weapons and equipment to meet their critical operational requirements, are but recent examples. The MOD statement accompanying the announcement perhaps says it all. “Considering the security environment due to the prevailing situation along the northern borders and the need to strengthen the armed forces for the defence of our borders.....”

That the IAF is way short of its authorised combat force level strength has long been known and something that more than our security planners, the Chinese strategic planners are acutely conscious of, as they are of the factor that had India used offensive air power in 1962, the story of that conflict may well have had a completely different ending. One can conjecture that whatever strategic offensive plans the Chinese have conceived towards breaching the LAC this time around, Indian air power capability and its potential use will have played an important part in the thought and planning process and in this, they perhaps sensed a window of opportunity before Rafale aircraft augmented the IAF’s arsenal. This is so because, unlike India, China recognises the potential of air power and has long worked on a strategic plan in aeronautics which vision is to develop aeronautics with Chinese characteristics,