

# New Innings for *The Golden Arrows*

## No.17 Squadron, now with Rafales



No.17 Squadron of the Indian Air Force which was formed on 1 October 1951 would be celebrating their 70<sup>th</sup> year in 2021 but for three years (2016-2019) were in suspended animation, when their MiG-21Ms were phased out at AFS Bhatinda in the Punjab. They would perhaps have remained thus (like several other former MiG-21 squadrons) but for the fact that when squadrons were to be chosen for receiving the new Dassault Rafale F3-R, the CAS was Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa who had been CO No.17 Squadron during the Kargil operations in the summer of 1999. The rest is history!

As for history, the following article appeared in *Vayu's* Issue VI/1988, when most of the officers and men of today's No.17 Squadron were perhaps still in their teens. It is hoped that the 'Golden Arrows' would maintain this record of theirs for inspiration in the times to come.

Militant postures in the subcontinent over the 1950-51 period required that the Indian Air Force be expanded to support the Army in the contingency of operations against Pakistan. The IAF was under severe constraint in terms of equipment and funding at the time but a number of new squadrons were rapidly raised with whatever aircraft could be obtained from reserves within the country. The IAF's combat force then consisted of some six fighter squadrons with the Tempest II and Spitfire Mk.XVIII, some Vampires and two units with reclaimed B-24 Liberators.

