

Prof. Prodyut Das and ...



... An inquest into the HF-24 Marut

The Rafale has been a very excellent and welcome addition to the IAF fleet but to change the game we shall need a platform that has the following attributes. It should be available in numbers, it should be affordable in numbers and it should be *aatmanirbhar*. This word does not simply mean self-reliant; it means self-confident self-reliance. This translates into being master of the design its manufacture and our ability to continue to boldly tweak the design expeditiously to suit the ever changing needs of operations. In this context should we not re-look at the HF 24 which as a platform is the finest the Indian Air Force has ever had.

I mentioned the Rafale as an illustration. I put to you the case that we order the Rafale but do not buy the afterburner fuel pumps –to save foreign exchange- never mind the aircraft would never reach full potential. Then, say to save engine TBO or some such reason, the engine throttles were wire locked to give only 73% of the design's cold thrust. Instead of working to get rid of the "wire locks" on priority, long term programmes are undertaken to design entirely new engines to replace what was available and ready to be modified. The benighted aircraft are sent war where they perform very reasonably suffering a lower actual loss rate than the Su-7. Subsequently the aircraft are often AOG'ed for weeks for lack of tuppence worth of Bostik or a packet of AGS split pins. Finally the Rafales are deemed unsatisfactory and

retired with alacrity after only fifteen years of colour service. Despite failing to improve the existing aircraft it is thought eminently sensible to launch an entirely new programme with all its brand new uncertainties! "Wait a minute!" "I can hear you remonstrate "No one sane will do a thing like that!" Well that is actually what we did to the Marut. Should we not re-

examine the brilliant airframe for fulfilling the MWF role as it would be a solution brilliant in its feasibility and simplicity.

If you are ab initio on the Marut there is much material on the web. I would suggest that you look up [www. Marutfans.org](http://www.Marutfans.org) or go to Pushpinder Singh Chopra's "The Spirit of the Wind" to hear all the anecdotes lovingly recounted. It was a wonderful aeroplane and

