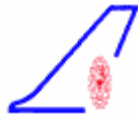


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Flight Displays at Aero India 2003

"The amazing Surya Kiran's still managed to make a pleasing impression. "



[AeroIndia bundle](#)



The Surya Kiran showing off the national colours



Two Surya Kiran's threaten to crash into each other, but break away safely at the last moment



A striking display by the Surya Kirans



Wg Cdr Ashoka didn't fly the HANSA this time



The NAL stall was very impressive ..



.. with the technology showcase being one of the

highlights



Photographs taken by our colleague Mr D V Gopalakrishna of Information Management Division

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HANSA at Aero India 2003
"HANSA flew gracefully -- as always"



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The HANSA was flown by Yogendra P Urs, the only civilian pilot at AeroIndia 2003



Photographs taken by our colleague Mr N S Suresh Kumar of Materials Science Division

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Flight display of Mirages at Aero India 2003

"The amazing manoeuvres of the screeching Mirages"



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Reflections on Aero India 2003



Aero India 2003, held during 5-9 February 2003, was the fifth international air show at the Yelahanka AF Station outside Bangalore. It was the biggest so far. We had four halls for exhibitions this time (instead of three last time), we had more planes participating in the static displays and we had massive crowds, especially over the weekend, with massive accompanying traffic jams.

But otherwise it was more of the same thing. The same difficulty in getting in, the same programme schedules, the same media hype, the same sort of flying displays (although planes tended to fly a little higher this time -- perhaps because there have recently been a few sad accidents at air shows) and even the same menu in the crowded canteens. "I can no longer tell the difference between two air shows", Dr K Y Narayan told me as we were returning to NAL on the second evening.

NAL's preparation for this fifth air show was the best so far. The layout for the stall was planned months in advance and the final result was sufficiently pleasing. The NAL stall attracted a large number of 'serious' visitors, and most of them enjoyed getting into the pretty mock-up of the SARAS executive version to exchange notes or find out more about the SARAS and the HANSA. The tremendously positive media coverage for the SARAS roll out on 4 February 2003 was also a contributing factor. "Is this the same aircraft that rolled out yesterday?", many visitors asked.



Outside the HANSA flew gracefully -- as always -- and on each of the five days. Wg Cdr P Ashoka wasn't flying the HANSA this time, but Yogendra P Urs flew the pretty trainer well. Obviously the HANSA couldn't command the same attention as the screeching MiG's, Mirages and Sukhoi's, or the amazing Surya Kiran's, but it still managed to make a pleasing impression.



We saw more international visitors this time and there were several important announcements about new collaborations, many of them involving HAL. One now gets the distinct impression that India is emerging as a serious player in aeronautics. The talk now is not about selling alone; we're talking more about joint ventures and co-production. There's even the occasional talk about buying from India. One gets the impression that Indian aviation could really go places in the next decade.



A pointer to this was the title of Prof R Narasimha's keynote address at Aero India 2003's international seminar: "Is Indian aerospace all set for a boom?". In his thoughtfully-argued address, Prof Narasimha suggested that the boom is very much on the cards, "but it won't happen by itself. It must be made to happen". To make the boom happen, Prof Narasimha advocated carefully managed intervention by the Government. "The Indian aerospace industry, unlike the IT industry, won't grow if it is left to fend for itself", he cautioned.



It's always a relief when an air show is over because planning teams have to work extremely hard. At the end one also asks if such participation will yield profitable returns. It probably will, although the gains can be hard to quantify.