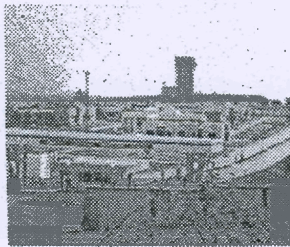


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# Nation's Fighters to Have a Kasargod Touch

by Anantha Krishnan M

**Bangalore:** A Kasargod stamp for India's mainline fighters! A dream that took birth in August 2008 is now closer to reality with the Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd all geared up to make its Strategic Electronics Factory (SEF) go live. Sources confirm to Express that the SEF situated at Seethangoli (where Seetha lost her anguli or ring) in KINFRA Industrial Park, will initially produce and maintain airborne computers and display processors for Jaguar, Su-30 MKI and MiG-27 aircraft. The first product from SEF would get onboard an aircraft during the first



quarter of 2012-13.

The unit will also manufacture radar computers for the Sukhoi and open architecture computers for Tejas. If HAL bags the software defined radio (SDR) project, this too will start beeping from Kasargod. "We are waiting for the final word from Delhi (read as Defence Minister A K Antony's date)

to inaugurate the facility. By the end of February or mid-March the production should begin," sources said.

The project got delayed with neighbouring land owners raising concerns, which got settled following the intervention of KINFRA and panchayat authorities. The HAL board had sanctioned an initial investment of Rs 69 crore and the amount has been invested now in infrastructure, buildings, machinery and equipment.

HAL faced strong internal backlash over the project with various employees' unions in Hyderabad up in arms.

"There were initial misgiv-

ings of losing jobs and projects being diverted to Kasargod. We have sorted things out through constant clarifications. The SEF will initially function under the administrative control of HAL Avionics Division, Hyderabad, till it becomes a full-fledged division, supporting itself," sources said.

Initially, around 75 personnel will be employed directly by HAL and the SEF will be headed by a chief of project.

The pre-production trial runs have commenced and the production facilities have been approved by statutory certification and quality assurance authorities.