XT-4

potent with potential

Japan's first new indigenous aircraft for a decade is on time, on specifi-cation, within budget, and eminently safeable. But no-one outside Japan will be able to buy it. Peter Middleton and Janice Lowe report from Gifu and Tokyo as Kawasaki's XT-4 trainer enters production.

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apan does not export armaments. This
is Government policy rather than constitutional tenet, but few regard it
as other than immutable.
Hitherto, the policy has been largely academic for the Japanese aerospace industry, because few of its post-war military products would have generated overseas demand. Given a competitive pricing policy, however, the Kawasaki XT-4 would probably be an exception, if it
! were not for the deep-rooted deter-I mination at all levels of Japanese society

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to refrain from anything which might be construed as a militaristic activity beyond the nation's own borders. So the XT-4 is being built with the sole purpose of train-ing pilots of the Japanese Air Self-Defence Force (JASDF), and it will have no oppor-tunity to expand the nation's balance-of-payments surplus.
The XT-4's performance stands comp-

The third XT-4 prepares for a flight test from Gifu

arison with that of the Hawk and Alpha Jet (which have accumulated sales of more than 650 and 500, respectively), but Japan Defence Agency planners, and the design team led by Kohki Isozaki, show none of the frustrations they may be harbouring over; their inability to demonstrate their technological prowess on the open market. They appear content to take quiet satis-faction from the knowledge that they are about to deliver to the JASDF what they confidently claim to be the highest-performance subsonic trainer now flying.

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