

IAF Southern Command chief takes Tejas for a spin

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Air Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria, Air Officer Commanding in Chief, Southern Command, with the aircraft.

Bengaluru: In a major leg up for made-in-India fighter jet “Tejas”, Air Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria, Air Officer Commanding in Chief (AOC-in-C), Southern Command, demonstrated its prowess during a solo flight in Bengaluru on Tuesday, a harbinger of operationalization of the fleet.

In the IAF hierarchy, Air Marshal Bhadauria stands second after Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa and former Air Chief Marshal Arup Raha to fly this combat aircraft. Air Marshal Bhadauria has been pushing the Aeronautical Development Agency and Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd for early operationalization of the fleet from the time he took over the reins of the Southern Air Command of IAF in March 2017. The IAF has placed an order for 123 ‘Tejas’ combat jets with the first squadron scheduled to move to its location at Sulur near Coimbatore shortly.

Mr. T. Suvarna Raju, CMD-HAL thanked the AOC-in-C for reposing faith in this advanced indigenous combat aircraft. HAL is set to ramp up production of these fighter aircraft from eight to 16 a year with the establishment of an additional production line in Bengaluru. The design activities for improved version, Tejas MkIA, are already underway. No 45 Squadron, “The Flying Daggers”, which was the first squadron to be equipped with Tejas LCA in July last year, played host to the Air Marshal who has been associated with ‘Tejas’ programme for the last 15 years.

Light Combat Aircraft gets a friendly morale 'lift'

Home-made Light Combat Aircraft Tejas got a much-needed morale lift on Tuesday when the Southern Air Command's Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief R.K.S. Bhadauria flew the fighter aircraft solo for 30 minutes in Bengaluru. Much to the LCA programme's comfort, Air Marshal Bhadauria, who took charge of the Southern Air command in March, has a 15-year-long association with it: he has flown 100 sorties on it as an experimental test pilot with the National Flight Test Centre.

The sortie from the HAL defence airport comes at a time when the LCA's worth has been purportedly maligned or doubted afresh in air force circles ostensibly in comparison with imported single-engine fighters. The LCA is currently undergoing final sets of trials, with weapons and devices that add it punch. Thereafter, it will go in for certification to get the FOC, or final operational clearance, as battle-ready.

The flight from the HAL airport gives "a fresh impetus to the induction and operationalisation of the indigenous fighter jet into the Indian Air Force," said a release from the Ministry of Defence.

After taking charge of the Southern Air Command, the release said, Air Marshal Bhadauria has been pushing the LCA's developer, the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA), and its manufacturer, Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL), to speed up the way to operationalise the fleet. HAL and ADA appreciate the flight as a major gesture by the IAF to endorse their efforts and re-affirm its continued support to the programme, the release said.

₹1300 crore ramp-up

So far, the IAF has placed orders for 40 LCAs in the first version and a subsequent ₹300 crore order for 80 more in the upgraded Mark-1A configuration.

Public sector manufacturer HAL said with a second assembly line in place, it is ramping up production from eight LCAs a year to 16. IAF and HAL have shared the cost of ₹1,300 crore to meet the delivery schedule. Designers at ADA, the release said, are completing all activities that are pending for the FOC. They have also taken up design activities on the improved version, Tejas Mk IA.

The IAF last year formed The No. 45 Squadron, or The Flying Daggers, which has a few early flying versions of the fighter. The squadron's air and ground crew are getting trained in Bengaluru. They will move to its designated base, at Sullur near Coimbatore, next year.

नवभारत टाइम्स

सवालोंने घिरे तेजस को वायु सेना का समर्थन

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■ नई दिल्ली : देश में बने हल्के लड़ाकू विमान तेजस की क्षमता को वायुसेना का सीधा सपोर्ट मिला है। इससे पहले रपटें आई थीं कि वायु सेना ने तेजस के प्रस्तावित अडवांस वर्जन को नापसंद कर दिया है और विदेशी कंपनियों के सिंगल इंजन लड़ाकू विमान खरीदने की वकालत की है। इसके तुरंत बाद वायुसेना के एक बड़े अफसर ने इस

विमान को खुद आधे घंटे उड़ाया है। वायुसेना के लिए तेजस बना रही पब्लिक सेक्टर की डिफेंस कंपनी हिंदुस्तान एरोनॉटिक्स लिमिटेड ने मंगलवार को बताया कि बेंगलुरु में दक्षिणी वायु कमान के कमान इन चीफ आरकेएस भदौरिया ने तेजस को आधे घंटे उड़ाया, जिससे विमान के ऑपरेशनल होने को बढ़ावा मिला। हर साल 8 तेजस बनाए जा रहे हैं, जिसे डबल करने की तैयारी है।