

समाचार पत्रों से चयित अंश Newspapers Clippings

दैनिक सामयिक अभिज्ञता सेवा
A daily Current Awareness Service

Vol. 43 No. 146 09 July 2018



रक्षा विज्ञान पुस्तकालय
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Tejas misses another deadline for being fully combat-ready

By Rajat Pandit

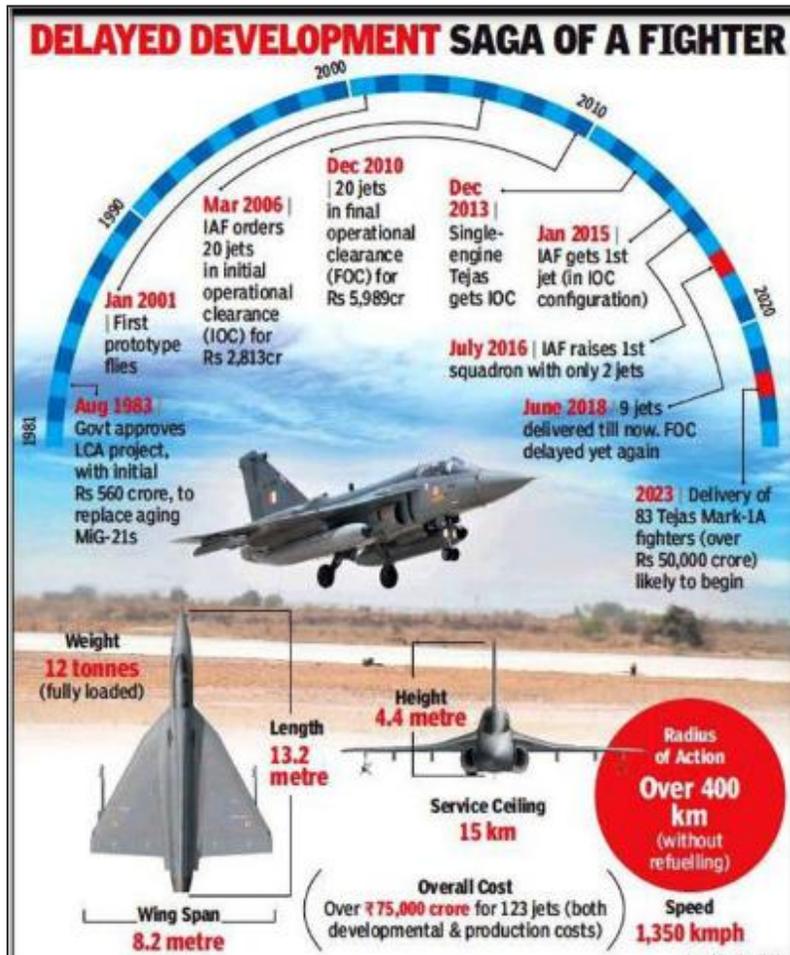
Highlights

- The government had repeatedly declared over the last couple of years that the jet would get its final operational clearance by June 2018

New Delhi: The indigenous Tejas fighter, first approved way back in 1983, has missed yet another deadline to become fully combat-ready. After several target revisions, the government had repeatedly declared over the last couple of years in Parliament that the jet would get its final operational clearance (FOC) by June 2018.

But the single-engine Tejas is still far away from achieving the FOC, amidst galloping. Costs and operational concerns, say defence ministry officials. The estimated overall development and production cost of the first 123 light-weight Tejas – only nine delivered till now in their initial operational clearance (IOC) configuration has also zoomed past Rs 75,000 crore.

India desperately needs its own home-grown fighter, with IAF down to just 31 fighter squadrons (each with 18 jets) when at least 42 are required to tackle Pakistan and China. The free-fall in numbers will



continue, despite induction of 36 French twin- engines Rafale fighters in 2019-2022 under the Rs 59,000 crore. Contract of September 2016, due to progressive retirement of 10 squadrons of old MiG-21s and MiG-27s. India of course also relaunched its Rs 1.25 lakh crore (\$20 billion) project to acquire.114 fighters, the bulk of them to be built domestically, in April. But it’s still early days for this long-drawn contest among F/A-18 and F-16 (US), Gripen-E (Sweden), MiG-35 (Russia), Rafale (France) and Euro fighter Typhoon, for which the six aviation majors submitted initial bids on Thursday and Friday.

Consequently , the continuing delay in Tejas, which achieved its IOC in December. 2013 to basically signify airworthiness remains a big operational worry. In 2011, DRDO had grandiosely announced Tejas would get FOC - which means the jets are ready for battle -- by 2012. Six years down the line, it remains a pipe dream. “Tejas has achieved significant gains but its entire project management needs to be overhauled. Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd is far away from delivering 16 Tejas per years required. MoD is also examining the Rs 50,000 crore being demanded by HAL for producing 83 Tejas Mark-1A fighters, with 43 improvements over the existing version,” said an official.

For now, Tejas needs to demonstrate its “engine relight and air-to-air refuelling” capabilities as well as firing from its twin-barrel GSh-23 cannon. The Mark 1A improvements include better maintainability, AESA (active electronically scanned array) radar to replace existing mechanically-steered radar, and advanced electronic warfare to jam enemy radars and missiles. Though Navy has rejected its aircraft

carrier-capable variant, IAF has put its weight behind Tejas. In addition to the “committed” 123 jets, it is open to inducting another 201 Tejas Mark-II jets if they are entirely new fighters with much better avionics and radars, enhanced fuel and weapons carrying capacity, and more powerful engines, as earlier reported by TOI.



Mon, 09 July 2018

Six bids to supply 110 fighters for IAF

F-16, Gripen, Boeing F-18, Rafale, Eurofighter Typhoon and MiG-35 enter the contest

By Dinakar Peri

Six global aircraft manufacturers have responded to a Request for Information (RFI) from the Indian Air Force to supply 110 fighter aircraft. The deadline for the RFI was July 6. All six manufacturers have earlier bid for the Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MMRCA), which was cancelled in 2015.

Officials confirmed that six bids have been received, of which Lockheed Martin F-16 and SAAB Gripen single-engine fighters are, while Boeing F-18, Dassault Rafale, Euro fighter Typhoon and United Aircraft Corporation MiG-35 are twin-engine ones.

“The bids will be evaluated after which the IAF will issue the Request for Proposal (RFP) with the exact specifications of the aircraft to be procured. The RFP is expected by early next year,” an official source said.

The RFI, issued on April 6, states that the government plans to buy 110 fighters jets, of which 85% will have to be built in India under the ‘Make in India’ programme in partnership with a “Strategic Partner/Indian Production Agency.”

The procurement will be processed through the Strategic Partnership (SP) model under the Defence Procurement Procedure. However, the SP model itself needs some clarification which could delay the process.

Air Force sources expressed confidence that the technical evaluation and trials can be completed very quickly, as all the aircraft have been extensively tested earlier.

“Once the process starts, from the technical evaluation to the down select of one aircraft, can be completed in less than two years. After that, it depends on how fast the contract negotiations can be completed,” a source said. Earlier, the IAF was looking for a single-engine jet to replace the MiG-21s and MiG-27s being phased out of service, but the RFI did not specify it, opening up the contest to both single-and twin-engine jets. Officials said both configurations were equally competent and the final choice would depend on the price and extent of technology transfer. According to informal estimates, the entire cost could be worth over \$15 billion. Single-engine aircraft will cost lower than the twin-engine jets, both in unit and operational costs. The move comes almost two decades after the IAF began the last major effort to acquire fighters in large numbers. The effort culminated in the global tender for 126 fighters under the MMRCA deal which was cancelled in 2015 after the Modi government decided to buy 36 Rafale fighters from France under a government-to- government deal.

रूस के साथ लड़ाकू विमान समझौते से अलग होगा भारत अधिक लागत को बताया वजह अनिच्छा से अवगत भी कराया

नई दिल्ली, प्रेस : रूस के साथ मिलकर दो लाख करोड़ रुपये (30 अरब डॉलर) की लागत से पांचवीं पीढ़ी के लड़ाकू विमान विकसित करने की परियोजना से भारत ने बाहर निकलने की इच्छा व्यक्त की है। भारत ने रूस को इससे अवगत भी करा दिया है। इसकी वजह परियोजना की अत्यधिक लागत को बताया गया है।

आधिकारिक सूत्रों ने बताया कि दोनों देशों के बीच इस बेहद महत्वकांक्षी परियोजना पर बातचीत अभी खत्म नहीं हुई है। इसका कारण यह है कि लागत को उचित तरीके से साझा करने का कोई फार्मूला निकलने की स्थिति में भारत लड़ाकू विमान के सहविकास पर फिर से विचार करने को तैयार है।

मालूम हो कि सैन्य संबंधों को नई ऊंचाइयों पर ले जाने के मकसद से भारत और रूस के बीच 2007 में लड़ाकू विमानों को संयुक्त रूप से तैयार करने का अंतर-सरकारी करार हुआ था, लेकिन लागत साझा करने, इस्तेमाल की जाने वाली तकनीक और तैयार किए जाने वाले



विमानों की संख्या के मामले पर गंभीर मतभेदों के कारण पिछले 11 साल से यह परियोजना अटकती हुई है। परियोजना पर बातचीत में शामिल एक शीर्ष अधिकारी ने बताया, 'हमने परियोजना की लागत समेत तमाम मसलों पर अपनी राय रख दी है, लेकिन रूसी पक्ष की ओर से अब तक कोई प्रतिबद्धता व्यक्त नहीं की गई है।'

बता दें कि भारत ने लड़ाकू विमान के प्रारंभिक डिजाइन के लिए दिसंबर, 2010 में 29.5 करोड़ डॉलर देने पर सहमति व्यक्त की थी। बाद में दोनों पक्षों ने अंतिम डिजाइन और पहले चरण में विमान के

एचएएल कर रही पैरवी, वायुसेना की रुचि नहीं

दिलचस्प बात यह है कि सरकारी कंपनी हिंदुस्तान एरोनॉटिक्स लिमिटेड (एचएएल) इस परियोजना की जोरदार पैरवी कर रही है। उसका मानना है कि इस परियोजना के जरिये भारत को अपने एरोस्पेस सेक्टर को बढ़ावा देने का सुनहरा मौका मिलेगा क्योंकि किसी अन्य देश ने भारत को आज तक ऐसी अहम तकनीक का प्रस्ताव नहीं दिया है। वहीं, दूसरी ओर ऊंची लागत की वजह से भारतीय वायुसेना ने इस परियोजना में दिलचस्पी नहीं दिखाई है।

उत्पादन के लिए छह-छह अरब डॉलर का योगदान देने पर सहमति जताई, लेकिन इस पर कोई अंतिम समझौता नहीं हो सका।

कहां फंसा है पेंच

भारत चाहता है कि विमान में इस्तेमाल होने वाली तकनीक पर दोनों देशों का समान अधिकार हो, लेकिन रूस विमान में इस्तेमाल की जाने वाली सभी अहम तकनीकों को भारत के साथ साझा करने के लिए तैयार नहीं है। वार्ता के

दौरान भारत ने जोर देकर कहा कि उसे सभी जरूरी कोड और अहम तकनीक उपलब्ध कराई जानी चाहिए ताकि वह अपनी जरूरतों के हिसाब से विमान को अपग्रेड कर सके। फरवरी, 2016 में तत्कालीन रक्षा मंत्री मनोहर पर्रीकर

की सहमति से परियोजना पर वार्ता फिर शुरू हुई थी। दोनों देश गतिरोध वाले मसलों का समाधान निकालने की कोशिश कर रहे हैं, लेकिन भारत परियोजना की ऊंची लागत से इसके फलदायी होने के प्रति आशान्वित नहीं है।



High costs may ground India's 5th-gen jet project with Russia

Rs 2 lakh crore project cost

India has conveyed to Russia its unwillingness to go ahead with the joint development of a fifth-generation fighter aircraft (FGFA) primarily due to high cost involved in the project, official sources said.

They, however, said the negotiations between the two countries on the much ambitious project have not yet been shelved as India was ready to have a re-look at co-development of the jet if an appropriate cost

sharing formula between the two countries was arrived at India and Russia had signed an inter-governmental agreement for the mega project in 2007, vowing to take the military ties between the two strategic partners to the next level.

However, the project has been stuck for the last 11 years as there have been serious differences between the two sides on sharing cost of developing the jet, technologies to be used in it and number of aircraft to be produced. The sources said the cost of the project has been estimated at around USD 30 billion or Rs 2 lakh crore. “Our position on various aspects of the project, including the cost component, has been conveyed to the Russian side and there has been no resolution to the issues yet,” a top official involved in the negotiations with Russia over the project said.

In December 2010, India had agreed to pay USD 295 million towards the preliminary design of the fighter jet. Later, both sides had expressed intent to contribute each USD 6 billion for final design and production of the aircraft in the first phase. However, they could not come out with a final agreement on it. “We have not closed our door on the project,” the sources said.

It is learnt that India was insisting on equal rights over the technology to be used in the aircraft but Russia was not ready to share all the critical technologies of the plane with New Delhi. In the negotiations for the project, India had insisted that it must get all the required codes and access to critical technology so that it can upgrade the aircraft as per its requirements, sources said. — PTI.