



Shortfalls in Fighter Jets - IAF

What is the issue?

\n\n

The Indian Air Force (IAF) does not have enough fighter jets and hence there is an immediate requirement to address the shortfall.

\n\n

What is the background?

\n\n

\n

- The IAF is now left with only 30 fighter squadrons and in a couple of years, it will be down to 26 squadrons.

\n

- The reason for this include -

\n

\n\n

\n

1. Gradual decommissioning of obsolete aircraft over time

\n

2. The loss of aircraft in crashes

\n

3. Massive delays in purchases of new aircraft

\n

\n\n

\n

- In comparison, the Pakistan Air Force will have 25 squadrons of fighter aircraft, while China will be able to unleash as many as 42 squadrons upon India in case of a conflict.

\n

- The government's mandate for the IAF is to be prepared for a two-front collusive threat from China and Pakistan.

- \n
- For this, the IAF is authorised 42 squadrons of fighter aircraft, which is the bare minimum it needs to dominate a two-front conflict.
- \n
- But the last time the IAF had the full complement of 42 squadrons was nearly 17 years ago, and the numbers have only fallen since.
- \n

\n\n

What should be done?

\n\n

- \n
- **Tejas** is the first advance Fly-by-wire (FBW) fighter aircraft designed and developed indigenously by Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and produced by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).
- \n
- Tejas is a 4th Plus generation aircraft with a glass cockpit and is equipped with state of the art Satellite aided Inertial Navigation System.
- \n
- It has a digital computer based attack system and an autopilot.
- \n
- It can fire Air to Air Missiles, Bombs as well as Precision Guided Munitions.
- \n
- The IAF is committed to get six squadrons from HAL, four of them of the Tejas Mark1A version.
- \n
- While HAL hopes to provide 18 aircraft per year, it has not been able to ramp up capacity to even half that number so far.
- \n
- This situation can impinge on the availability of fighter squadrons in the near future.
- \n
- The other option is to import more fighter aircraft.
- \n
- IAF will get two squadrons of Rafale by 2023, and it has plans for six squadrons of another foreign fighter within a decade.
- \n
- But the latter is still a proposal on the planning board, and a long way away from getting implemented.
- \n
- Thus, the IAF is looking at a scenario where it will have to undertake emergency imports, perhaps at an exorbitant cost, to make up the demand for fighter jets.

\n

\n\n

How do other major powers tackle situations like these?

\n\n

\n

- Among the global military powers, India is perhaps the only country which doesn't produce top quality fighter jets indigenously.

\n

- The US, Russia and the Europe, all have highly developed defence industries that can design, develop, produce and supply fighter jets to their air forces.

\n

- Countries like Pakistan and Israel can depend upon their allies, wherein Pakistan Air Force earlier got F16s from the US and now it gets the JF17 from China.

\n

- Since India has no such option, the long-term answer is to promote indigenous manufacturing in a major way.

\n

- But in the immediate term, there is a need to take steps to ensure that this shortfall is made up quickly as a national security imperative.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Indian Express

\n



IAS PARLIAMENT

Information is Empowering

A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative