

Combat Aircraft concerns

Why in news?

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The dysfunctional procurement of light combat aircraft is hindering the growth of indigenous defence sector.

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What are the recent aircraft deals?

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- **Gripen E** - Swedish company Saab and the Adani Group agreed to build the Gripen E single-engine fighter in India.

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- **F-16** - US-major Lockheed Martin and Tata Advanced Systems Ltd (TASL) to build the F-16 Block 70.

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- **Mirage 2000** -With the support of Dassault Aviation (French) and Thales teams as per the contract, these aircrafts are upgraded.

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- French vendor Dassault proposed shifting the Mirage 2000 production line to India.

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- **MiG29 M** - Deal have been initiated between Russia and IAF for procurement of MiG-29M.

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- Super Hornet- Boeing had made a deal to manufacture with F/A-18E/F Super Hornet in India.

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- **Typhoon** -Eurofighter GmbH consortium had offered the Typhoon deal to India.

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What are the issues with combat aircraft procurement?

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- From 1999 Indian Air Force demanded 126 combat aircraft to replace its ageing fleet of MiG-21 and MiG-27 light fighters.
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- It was originally hoped that the Tejas light combat aircraft would replace the MiGs.
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- But IAF decided to supplement its three-squadron fleet of Mirage 2000 multi-role fighters, which had performed well during Kargil.
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- The IAF immediate requirement was 126 fighters, the Tejas production was not able to meet that target.
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- The original plan to build an affordable, single-engine, light fighter was officially dead.
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- IAF finally picked the Rafael, the most expensive heavy fighter in the list.
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- It has ordered 36 Raffles for a mind-boggling ^7.87 billion, which is one-and-a-half times what was budgeted for 126medium range combat aircraft.
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What are the characteristics of Tejas aircraft?

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- The Tejas is an Indian single-seat, single-jet engine, multirole light fighter.
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- It is the smallest and lightest in its class of contemporary supersonic combat aircraft.
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- It is designed by the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for the Indian Air Force and Navy
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- As of 2016 the Tejas MK1 Only 21 aircrafts has been produced for the Indian Air Force (IAF) and the naval version was undergoing flight tests for Indian Navy (IN).
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- This indigenously produced will reduce the monetary constrains, and provide more efficiency of Indian Defence.
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Source: Business Standard

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