

The Tribune, 8 June 2005

**LCA needs policy directive: Ensure project implementation in time** (Maj-Gen Ashok Mehta (retd))

BARRING the ballistic missile programme, our experience with the indigenous production of military equipment has not been impressive. The MBT Arjun is a spectacular failure. Despite huge embarrassing time and cost overruns, we have a tank that will not fight the Army's future battle. Anticipating the performance and confidence deficit in the programme, the Army ordered T-90 tanks from Russia to plug the inventory gap. Incidentally, nearly 60 per cent of the Arjun components are imported. It is a different matter that the project director was elevated to the post of Scientific Adviser to the Defence Minister and is also Director-General of Aeronautical Defence Agency (ADA). It is the ADA that manages the indigenous LCA (Tejas) project, which too has undergone strikingly similar teething troubles. After spending Rs 5500 crore the Tejas is the most ambitious aircraft development programme undertaken by India, and if we wish it to take off, the government has to get its act together immediately. Nearly 400 successful flights from three prototypes have put India on the threshold of potential fourth generation fighter aircraft manufacturing. The LCA, which was once called the "Last Chance Aircraft" (or "Last Chance for Arunachalam", after the previous Scientific Adviser) must no longer be a bad joke. The stakes are too high. The real and lingering threat to the LCA is from poor direction and management, verily being the role played by the DRDO and the ADA and the virtual "hands off" attitude of the IAF.

The Times of India, 10 June 2005

**Don't go for those F-16s** (RAVI VISVESVARAYA PRASAD)

India should be wary of accepting the US offers of F-18 and F-16 aircraft. Lt Gen Jeffrey Kohler of the Defence Security Cooperation Agency said Washington would place their sales on a fast-track government-to-government channel. Defence minister Pranab Mukherjee will visit Washington this month to discuss transfer of technologies and manufacture of these in India under licence. The aircraft are best avoided for several reasons. First, the fourth-generation Boeing F-18 Hornets and Lockheed Martin F-16 Falcons are not as capable as the Swedish SAAB JAS-39C Gripen, the Russian RSK MiG-29M/M2 and the French Dassault Mirage 2000-5 Mk2. The only advantages of the F-16s and F-18s compared to the Sukhoi Su-30MKI, MiG-29M/M2 and Mirage 2000-5 Mk2 are their superior cockpit ergonomics and comfortable pilot seat. However, the US Air Force, too, is phasing out the F-16s in favour of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. Second, India is apprehensive about transfer of technologies, training of personnel, supplies of spare parts and logistical support from US suppliers in view of negative experiences in the past. Kohler failed to allay India's apprehensions about possible future sanctions, saying: "I am not sure if any government could give a 100% guarantee. India should be satisfied with a reasonable level of assurance".

The Tribune, 10 June 2005

**IAF team leaves for France to take part in 'Garuda-II'**

Bareilly, June 9: An Indian Air Force team, comprising six Su-30K air superiority fighters and an Il-78 mid-air refueller, today left for France to participate in 'Garuda-II' - the second joint fighter exercise with the French Air Force. The Su-30Ks, from No 24 Squadron ('Hunting Hawks') and the Il-78 from the Agra-based Mid-Air Refuelling Squadron (MARS), were flagged off from here by Vice-Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal S K Malik. Speaking on the occasion, the Vice-Chief called on the Air Warriors to "live up to the reputation" of the IAF by doing well in the exercise. Observing that it was "very difficult" to build a reputation and "equally difficult to maintain it", he said the exercise offered them "a big challenge" of flying in 'a different environment and tight air space'. Later, briefing reporters on the aims of the exercise, Air Marshal Malik said 'Garuda-II', where the Sukhois match their expertise against the French Air Force's Mirage 2000-5 fighters as well as the older Mirage 2000C version, would focus on air defence techniques as well as acquaint the IAF with use of an AWACS.

The Tribune, 11 June 2005

**Indian fighters for France** (Girja Shankar Kaura)

As part of Indo-French defence cooperation, six Indian fighter aircraft and a mid-air refueller have left for the Istres Air Base in France for the 'Garuda II' air exercise, which be held from June 15 to June 30. This will be the second such exercise between the two Air Forces with the Garuda-I held in India in the month of February two years ago. The Indian Air Force will deploy six Sukhoi 30 fighter jets for the exercise, along with the IL - 78 air-to-air refuelling aircraft. The aircraft were flagged off from the Bareilly air base on Thursday. The French Air Force will be deploying its Mirage 2000 fighter and C-135 FR tanker aircraft. The Indian Air Force contingent comprises 120 personnel - the Sukhoi 30 aircrew (18), IL -78 aircrew (05), engineers/administration and medical officers (10) and technicians (87).

The Tribune, 14 June 2005

**Air chief leaves for France today**

New Delhi, June 13: Bidding strongly to grab the contract for the 126 aircraft which the Indian Air Force (IAF) is

looking to add to its inventory, the week-long visit of the Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal S.P. Tyagi, to Paris from tomorrow would provide French officials a chance to further hold talks with Indian officials on the issue of offering Mirage 2000. Although the Air chief would be in Paris to witness the air show and meet the IAF personnel participating in the Indo-French exercise "Garuda-II", but he would also be holding talks with his French counterpart. He would also visit the Istres air base, where the IAF contingent is participating in the military exercise with Sukhoi-30 aircraft.

The Hindu, 14 June 2005

#### **Hawk tools delivered to HAL**

DUBAI: The first shipment of production tools of the BAE Hawk advanced jet trainer has been delivered on schedule to Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) in Bangalore. It is the first batch of tooling and test equipment supplied by BAE Systems for licensed production of the Hawk Mk132 airframe and engine in India, a company statement said here. Of the Hawk advanced jet trainers ordered by India, 24 are being supplied by BAE Systems "ready to fly," six are delivered in kits and 42 will be built by HAL. Over the next 18 months, more than 3,000 tools will be sent along with kit sets and raw materials for airframes and engines. In this complex logistical operation, tooling and aircraft hardware will be shipped for production of 42 Hawks at HAL under licence from BAE Systems. Engineers of both BAE Systems and engine supplier Rolls Royce will be based in Bangalore to provide technical on-site assistance to HAL engineers.

The Hindu, 15 June 2005

#### **US offers India co-production of fighter planes**

Washington, June 15: The US has offered to sell to India F-16 fighter aircraft and its advanced versions as also entering into a co-production agreement for the warplanes, US Assistant Secretary of State Christina Rocca said here on Tuesday. The offer of co-production "is a big step," and shows that US relations with India are becoming "ever closer," Rocca told the House International Relations Subcommittee for Asia and the Pacific. She said the US reserves the co-production agreement for our close allies. Terming 2005 as "a watershed year in US-India relations," she said, "We are accelerating the transformation of our relationship with India, with a number of new initiatives. We are engaging in a new strategic dialogue on global issues, and on defence and expanded advanced technology cooperation."