

Tejas fighter completes 7 years of service in IAF

India's homegrown light combat aircraft (LCA) on Friday completed seven years of service in the Indian Air Force (IAF).

Christened Tejas in 2003 by former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the fighter aircraft is a multi-role platform that is steadily making a name as one of the world's premier light fighters.

Designed by the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO), the multi-role Tejas fighter can perform the roles of air defence, maritime reconnaissance and strike, switching between roles with the press of a button.

Tejas is built to be an inherently unstable fighter, with a sophisticated and quadruplex flight control system. This allows the pilot carefree handling and enhanced manoeuvrability.

This multi-role capability is further enhanced by the Tejas' multi-mode airborne radar, helmet-mounted display system, a self-protection suite and a laser designation pod.

The first 20 Tejas Mark 1 fighters formed the IAF's Number 45 Squadron — the "Flying Daggers." Over the years, 45 Squadron has flown Vampires, Gnats and then the MiG-21 BIS, before being equipped with the Tejas Mark 1.

All the aircraft flown by the Flying Daggers have been manufactured in India — first under licenced production, and then, like the Tejas, designed and developed in India as well.

In May 2020, No 18 Squadron became the second IAF unit to operate the Tejas — still in its Mark 1 variant. [The IAF followed up those 40 fighters with another order for 83 more, in a more advanced variant called the Mark 1A.]

The IAF's confidence in the Tejas is underlined by the latest order for 83 Mark-1A fighters. These will have updated avionics, an active

electronically-steered radar, an updated electronic warfare suite and a beyond visual range missile capability.

The new LCA variant will be capable of firing a range of weapons, missiles and cannon-fire from increased stand-off ranges. The Tejas LCA will see a substantial increase in the overall indigenous content of the aircraft.

Contracted deliveries of the aircraft are expected to commence in February 2024. In the years to come, the LCA and its future variants will form an important mainstay of the IAF.

The IAF has showcased the DRDO's indigenous aerospace design, development and production capabilities by showcasing the aircraft at various international air displays.

These include the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace in Malaysia, Dubai Air Show-2021, Sri Lanka Air Force anniversary celebrations in 2021, Singapore Air Show-2022 and Aero India Shows from 2017 to 2023.

After participating in numerous exercises in the Indian skies with foreign air

forces, Tejas made its debut abroad in March 2023 in Exercise Desert Flag in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Meanwhile, Pakistan and China have also joined hands to develop their own light fighter called the JF-17 Thunder. The Pakistan Air Force has inducted more than 100 JF-17 Thunder jets since 2007.

THUNDER VERSUS TEJAS MK 1

	JF-17 Thunder	Tejas Light Combat Aircraft
■ First flight	25-Aug-03	4-Jan-01
■ Entry into service	12-Mar-07	17-Jan-15
■ Numbers in service	Over 100	40, with 83 more on order
■ Engine Type	Klimov RD-93 Turbofan	GE F-404 turbofan
■ Range	3,482 km	3,000 km
■ Top speed	1,910 km/hour	2,205 km/hour
■ Empty weight	9,000 kg	6,500 kg
■ Max take-off weight	13,500 kg	13,500 kg
■ Payload	4,500 kg	5,300 kg
■ Fuel capacity	5,400 litres	6,400 litres
■ Combat range	1,200 km	1,500 km
■ Rate of climb	300 metres/second	NA
■ Armament carriage	1 x 23 mm Gasha cannon 8 x hard points for free-fall bombs, missiles, rockets	1 x 23 mm Gasha cannon 9 x hard points for free-fall bombs, missiles, rockets

Note: The JF-17 Thunder has been jointly developed by China and Pakistan



MoD INKS ₹2,725 cr CONTRACT WITH MDL FOR REFIT OF SUBMARINE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, 30 June

The defence ministry on Friday inked a ₹2,725 crore contract with the Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) for refit of submarine *INS Shankush*.

Shankush is a Sub-Surface Killer (SSK) class submarine. "The Ministry of Defence has signed a contract on June 30 for medium refit with life certification (MRLC) of sub-surface killer class of submarine *INS Shankush* with M/S Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd, Mumbai at an overall cost of ₹2,725 crore," the ministry said.

It said the submarine post MRLC will be delivered in 2026. "After completion of MRLC, *INS Shankush* will be combat ready and will join the active fleet of the Indian Navy with upgraded combat capability," it added.

"This project is an important step towards development of MDL as Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) Hub for supporting the industrial ecosystem of India," the ministry further said.