

Tata, Dassault team up to make Rafale fuselage in India

This is the first time it will be produced outside France

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The fuselage of the Rafale combat aircraft is set to be manufactured in India for the first time, with defence major Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) and France's Dassault Aviation announcing on Thursday the signing of four production transfer agreements for the manufacture of key structural sections for both domestic and global markets.

In an official release, the two companies said: "Under the scope of the partnership, TASL will set up a cutting-edge production facility in Hyderabad for the manufacture of key structural sections of the Rafale, including the lateral shells of the rear fuselage, the complete rear section, the central fuselage, and the front section."

The first fuselage sections are expected to roll off the Hyderabad assembly line in FY28, they said, adding that the facility is expected to deliver up to two complete fuselages per month.

Dassault Aviation Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Eric Trappier said that under this agreement, Rafale fuselages would be produced outside France for the first time. "This is a decisive step in strengthening our supply chain in India," he said. Highlighting the expansion of Dassault's local partners, including TASL, he added, "This supply chain will contribute to the successful ramp-up of the Rafale and, with our support, will meet our quality and competitiveness requirements."

TASL CEO and Managing Director Sukaran Singh said the collaboration with Dassault "reflects the remarkable progress India has made in establishing a modern, robust aerospace manufacturing ecosystem that can support global platforms".

In April, India signed an inter-governmental agreement (IGA) worth ₹64,000 crore with France to procure 26 Rafale-Marine combat aircraft to bolster the Indian Navy's firepower, in the country's largest-ever fighter jet acquisition. This includes transfer of technology for integrating indigenous weapons onto the jets. It also provides for a new production facility for their fuselage, along with maintenance, repair, and overhaul facilities for aircraft engines, sensors, and weapons



New horizons

- Rafale fuselage to be produced for both India and other countries
- TASL will set up production facility in Hyderabad for manufacture of key structural sections
- Facility expected to deliver up to two complete fuselages per month
- First fuselage sections expected to roll off the assembly line in FY28

in India. The Indian Air Force had earlier acquired 36 Rafale jets under a ₹60,000 crore IGA with France signed in September 2016.

The agreements between Dassault and TASL come amid a growing focus on boosting private sector participation in the production of indigenous combat aircraft, with the recently approved execution model for developing the prototype of the fifth-generation Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft offering equal opportunity to domestic public and private defence firms to compete in building the stealth jet — a move that could end Hindustan Aeronautics Limited's monopoly in fighter jet production.

An industry insider said the tie-up marked the continuation of the decade-long trend of Indian private firms being integrated into the supply chains of global defence majors. "This latest development marks a more comprehensive integration into the supply chain of a cutting-edge foreign fighter," the source said.