

IAF to get first Tejas Mk1A this yr; foreign buyers keen: HAL execs

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Deliveries of the first Tejas Mark-1A (Mk1A) combat aircraft to the Indian Air Force (IAF) could begin this year, with several countries across South America, Africa, and Southeast Asia also expressing interest in the indigenous jet, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) executives said on Friday at the inauguration of the company's third Tejas production line at its Aircraft Manufacturing Division in Nashik.

The new Tejas production line was inaugurated by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, who also witnessed the maiden flight of the first Mk1A jet to roll out from it. Singh also inaugurated the second production line for the Hindustan Turbo Trainer-40 (HTT-40), the indigenous basic trainer aircraft designed and developed by HAL. One of these trainers, along with a Sukhoi Su-30MKI, joined the Tejas in the air as the three flew in formation and performed acrobatic manoeuvres.

HAL's Nashik facility also undertakes repair and overhaul of the Su-30MKI fleet. In the past, it has also produced nearly 1,000 Soviet- and Russian-origin jets under licence — 575 MiG-21s, 270 Su-30MKIs, and 125 MiG-27s.

Singh stressed that as warfare evolves rapidly, HAL



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh flags off the first made-in-India Tejas Mk1A fighter jet in Nashik

PHOTO: PTI

must look beyond the light combat aircraft (LCA) Tejas and HTT-40 to establish itself in next-generation combat aircraft, unmanned systems, and civil aviation.

On the sidelines of the event, company executives said deliveries of the Tejas Mk1A to the IAF would begin within this year, but only after the successful completion of the weapons-firing trials currently underway. "Ultimately, it's a weapons delivery platform," one of them said, adding that successful integration of the indigenous Astra beyond-visual-range missile, the British ASRAAM missile for close-range combat, and laser-guided bombs for ground attack was a critical requirement.

HAL missed the original February 2024 deadline to begin deliveries, primarily due to delays in the arrival of F404-IN20 engines from American

manufacturer GE Aerospace. The company has already built around 10 Mk1A aircraft, though most are fitted with reserve engines as an interim measure. With GE handing over the fourth F404 engine on September 30, HAL expects the supply situation to stabilise. Successful weapons integration has been another challenge.

Earlier, the company had assured that 12 Mk1A aircraft would be delivered by the end of 2025-26.

A fourth Tejas production line could also be set up in Nashik in the future if the growing interest from several foreign countries leads to export orders, HAL officials said. "We are receiving a number of enquiries from abroad, and if demand increases, we can add one more line here," the company executive quoted above

Adityanath, Rajnath to flag off first batch of BrahMos missiles

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will flag off the first batch of BrahMos missiles manufactured at the BrahMos Aerospace unit in Lucknow's Sarojini Nagar on Saturday, an official statement said.

The statement said it will not only prove to be a milestone for the Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor (UPDIC) but will also provide a new energy to India's resolve to achieve self-reliance in defence products. **PTI**

added. While declining to name specific countries, they said the interest had come from various regions, including South America, Southeast Asia, and Africa. "We've got good leads, and there's a lot of proactive support from the government," the executive said.

The third line in Nashik has a current capacity of eight Mk1A jets a year. The company executives said that plans are in place to expand it to 10 aircraft annually within the next two years.