FINALLY, SEARCH BEGINS FOR A FIGHTER TO REPLACE MIG-21S

News / Manufacturer

The aircraft, to be manufactured in India, will replace the large number of ageing Mig-21s

Within days of signing the deal to buy 36 Rafale fighter jets from France, the Defence Ministry has issued a Request For Information (RFI) to global aircraft manufacturers, formally starting the process to select yet another fighter to be built in India under technology transfer.

Sources told *The Hindu* that an RFI for a single-engine fighter to be manufactured in India with extensive technology transfer was issued this week to countries involved in fighter aircraft manufacture. Based on the responses, a detailed RFP (Request for Proposal) would be issued later.

Last month, India and France concluded a government-to-government deal worth €7.87-billion

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deal for 36 Rafale multi-role jets in flyaway condition.

The selected aircraft is expected to replace the large number of MiG-21s in service, which will be phased out over the next few years.

Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar has stated in the past that the Rafale, a medium-weight jet, is not a replacement for MiG-21s and another aircraft would be selected to replace the latter. He has also said these would be built in partnership with the private sector.

Addressing the Indian Air Force on the 84th raising day, Air Chief Marshal (ACM) Arup Raha observed that an “early decision on indigenous ‘Make in India’ fighter aircraft project would greatly enhance our operational capability in the near term.”

Boeing and Lockheed Martin of the U.S. and SAAB of Sweden have already submitted detailed proposals to manufacture their F-18, F-16 and Gripen jets respectively in India under the ‘Make in India’ initiative.

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