Defence Minister approves AMCA fighter jet execution model through industry tie-up

The first prototype of AMCA is expected to roll out by 2028-29 and production is expected to begin from 2032-33 with induction targeted in 2034, as per officials

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DINAKAR PERI

A view of the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraftf fighter jet designed by the Aeronautical Development Agency. File photo | Photo Credit: ANI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has approved the execution model for the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft, under which Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) will compete with the private industry to manufacture the indigenous fifth-generation fighter jet. The Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) is set to execute the

programme through industry partnership, the Defence Ministry said on Tuesday (May 27, 2025).

Speeding up the development and induction of AMCA has become critical since China has already fielded two fifth gen fighters and is set to supply 40 J-35s to Pakistan, and especially so after the military confrontation under Operation Sindoor.

“HAL has the advantage of experience, but they will have to bid along with the industry either individually or in a consortium with others,” two defence sources independently said. “[HAL] will have to fight it out,” one of the sources added. HAL will not be the default manufacturer, the other source stated. So far, the defence public sector undertaking is the country’s sole manufacturer of fighter jets.

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The AMCA project, the country’s only fifth gen fighter programme, received approval from the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) in March 2024 at an approximate cost of ₹15,000 Crore as a 25-tonne twin engine stealth aircraft.

“The execution model approach provides equal opportunities to both private and public sectors on competitive basis. They can bid either independently or as joint venture or as consortia. The entity/bidder should be an Indian company compliant with the laws and regulations of the country,” a Defence Ministry statement said.

As reported by *The Hindu* earlier, the design of AMCA is ready and the first prototype is expected to roll out by 2028-29 and production is expected to begin from 2032-33. The target is to have the aircraft ready for induction in 2034.

This is an important step towards harnessing the indigenous expertise, capability and capacity to develop the AMCA prototype, which will be a major milestone towards *Aatmanirbharta* (self-reliance) in the aerospace sector, the Ministry said adding that ADA will shortly issue an Expression of Interest (EoI) for the AMCA development phase.

AMCA will feature internal weapons bay and diverterless supersonic intake which has been developed in India for the first time with an internal carriage of 1,500 kg of payload and 5,500 kg of external payload with 6,500 kg of internal fuel. Officials had stated earlier that Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) will be the lead production agency with significant involvement of the private sector to speed up the project.

Two-phases development

Development of AMCA is planned to be carried out in two phases, a MK1 with the General Electric F-414 engine and a Mk2 with a more powerful engine planned to be co-developed in partnership with Saran of France for which discussions have been under way over the last few years. The F-414 engine is the same that will power the under-development Light Combat Aircraft (LCA)-Mk2 that was sanctioned in September 2022. A deal to licence-manufacture the F-414 in India by HAL is in advanced states of conclusion.

While the indigenous LCA programme is expected to address the falling fighter squadron strength of the Indian Air Force (IAF), the AMCA project is critical to maintain the technological edge and will be the mainstay of the IAF in future. China, which has made great progress in the development and deployment of FGFAs, has deployed its twin-engine J-20 FGFA in Tibet bordering India and recently unveiled an advanced prototypes of its fifth generation fighters.

A report to the U.S. Congress on the military and security developments in China for 2024 noted that the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) and People's Liberation Aarmy Naval Aviation (PLANAV) together constitute the largest aviation force in the Indo-Pacific region.

The PLAAF and PLANAV continue to field greater numbers of fourth-generation aircraft (now more than 1,300 of 1,900 total fighters, not including trainers) and probably will become a majority fourth-generation force in the next several years, the report added. In addition, J35 and J-20 are being added at a phenomenal rate and flight testing of the latest jets indicates a fairly advanced state and that they have been under development for sometime.

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