



*Tue, 08 Aug, 2017*

*(Online)*

## **Tejas Continues To Face Delivery Delays**

Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd or HAL continues to run well behind schedule in delivering India's first indigenous jet fighter, Tejas Mark I. The government-controlled company was supposed to have delivered four Tejas Mark I aircraft by March 2016, and a total of 12 by March 2017, and the entire 20 in the first lot were supposed to have been delivered by March 2018.

Instead, according to defence ministry data, the company has delivered only four Mark I aircraft so far. It has another 12 under production.

India needs around 300 light combat jets, out of which HAL is supposed to supply 40 in the form of Mark I jets — the first 'generation' of the aircraft.

From 2019 onwards, HAL is supposed to work on supplying another 83 upgraded version of the model, called Mark 1A.

However, according to current timelines, the company is likely to start production of the improved version only by 2021.

Instead of Mark IA, HAL was supposed to have worked on the larger and more advanced Mark II.

However, the company in 2015 told the government it didn't have the manpower to focus on the production of the Mark I and, at the same time, develop the second generation.

As a result, the responsibility for the second generation is being handled by Aeronautical Development Agency or ADA, a wing of the Defence Research and Development Organization.

There has been considerable competition between the DRDO and HAL on the project. Last month, the defence ministry even got an unsigned letter alleging that HAL's move to float a global tender to buy an electronic array radar instead of waiting for DRDO's version amounted to wastage of public money.

Meanwhile, DRDO's ADA wing is going full speed on developing Tejas Mark II, and HAL faces the risk that if Mark II is ready by 2022-23, it could affect the demand for the IA version.