

DRDO's Tech Claim Fells \$9b Indo-Russian Aircraft Deal

Plan Was To Develop Next-Gen Fighter Aircraft It has now been decided to purchase jets off the shelf in the future if need arises

DRDO claimed it either had all the techs or was in the process of developing indigenously

A \$9-billion deal to codevelop a next-generation fighter aircraft with Russia fell through after Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) shot it down saying it either had all the technologies such a

project would bring to India or was in the process of developing these indigenously. The mega deal, which would have put India next to the US and China besides Russia with a fifth generation fighter aircraft, has been called off with a decision to purchase the jets off the shelf in the future, if the need arises. Sources who were involved in the negotiations and are knowledgeable about the decision to let it go for now said the nail in the coffin for the PAK FA project was the insistence

India to Lag Behind; China, US Already have 5th Gen Fighter

The Indian next-gen fighter was to be based on Sukhoi T-50

Russian Jet is already undergoing flight trials in Russia

It was to be tailor-made for Indian requirements with over 40 Improvements over the Russian version

India had negotiated \$9-billion deal to develop the fighter, produce 127 jets in India

With this miss, India will have capability gap as fifth-generation fighter plane programme is back to square one. India will develop own advanced medium combat aircraft (AMCA)

However, AMCA programme to take at least a decade to develop. Meanwhile, China and the US have already operationalised fifth-generation jets that have stealth capability, advanced weaponry

India to now rely on advanced Rafale jets as its most cutting-edge fighters for the next decade or so

by DRDO that it had the ability to develop all technologies needed. The fifth-generation jet project was an offer by Russia to share and codevelop a new fighter aircraft tailored for India that would see significant percentage of the research being carried out in India and a complete transfer of technology. India has already paid \$295 million to Russia for the preliminary design phase of the project.

An official said the termination of the deal meant this money has now gone 'down the drain.' Sources said that at a top-level meeting on the project earlier this year, conducted by the PMO, the Air Force expressed reservations on the Russian proposal meeting all its requirements. While these were being addressed, with suggestions by top officials that improvements could be made, DRDO was asked for its opinion on whether the deal would result in the infusion of high-end technologies in India. An emphatic response by then DRDO chief, S Christopher, sealed the fate of the programme. India has now told Russia that it would not be participating in the development part of the programme, but would consider purchasing the fighter jets in the future as and when the technology matures and is proven. The deal being negotiated was to make a tailored jet for India with four flying prototypes to be delivered by 2019-20. It also included production facilities for at least 127 aircraft in India. Russia has also offered to sell India 20 of its older MiG-29 fighter jets to boost the declining fighter strength for a little over ₹2000 crore. A decision on taking this proposal forward is however yet to be taken.