

IAF to give its Tejas jets the Meteor missile edge

By Manjeet Sehgal

Seeing to enhance the capability of the indigenous Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas, the Indian Air Force is planning to equip it with a long-range missile of the Meteor class which will help it get an edge over the jets of the adversaries. The missiles are required to be equipped on the 83 Mark 1A LCAs for which an



order has been placed by the air force with the public sector unit Hindustan Aeronautics Limited. "The request for proposal has asked the aircraft to be equipped with a long range beyond visual range missile of the class of Meteor which can take out enemy aircraft in the range of more than 100 kilometres. This would help the LCA get an edge over the aircraft with adversaries," said government sources. The LCA Mark 1A, which will be lesser capable than the LCA Mark 2 which is under development by the

DRDO agencies, lacks certain capabilities when compared to the other planes but with a longer range missile, it can take down the enemy aircraft without coming in their striking ranges, the sources added.

Both Pakistan and China do not have a missile in the range of the Meteor which has been developed by a European consortium and would be equipped with the Rafale combat planes that are being acquired from France by India. India has bought a package of the European Meteor missiles along with the Rafales and may prove to be game changers due to their beyond-visual-range striking capability of over 100 km.

The sources said that till the Kargil war and a few years after that, the Indian Air Force had complete superiority over the Pakistan Air Force as it did not have any beyond-visual-range missile fitted on their F-16s or the Chinese supplied planes. The Meteor missile was not part of the Rafale deal that was being done by the UPA government but when Modi decided to go in for an emergency procurement of the Rafale planes from France, the IAF desired to include the Meteors as part of the weapons package. During the Kargil War, the Indian side had two beyond-visual-range missiles which included the French S530D and the Russian RVV AE missile which deterred the Pakistanis from using its fighter plane fleet in the Kargil war with India, the sources said. "The over-arching consideration was the BVR missile capability of IAF fighters which impinged unfavourably on the mission success probability," former Pakistan Air Force officer air commodore Kaiser Taufel had written in his blog about the war. "One good thing about the Meteor is that it has not yet been integrated with any American-origin aircraft and the Pakistani F-16s or the Chinese-origin JF-17s can't get them in the times to come as well. The possibility of the Chinese integrating them is also ruled out," a source said.