

## The LCA Navy

# To Sea or not to Sea



*This computer generated image of the INS Vikrant (IAC-1) shows MiG-29Ks on deck (courtesy DND)*

On the eve of Navy Day, 4 December 2016, the ‘Silent’ Service made an outspoken announcement in which it peremptorily rejected the shipborne variant of the Tejas light combat aircraft (LCA) which has been under development at ADA for over a decade. For those outside the corridors of South Block, this was somewhat surprising, considering it was

the Navy which, unlike the Air Force, had championed its LCA (Navy) programme and had contributed considerable funding forwards its development since 2003. Former CNS, Admiral Arun Prakash, who has for long been an outspoken advocate of indigenisation, commented on the Navy’s rejection of the Tejas as “a lesson ... failure of the DRDO (and) ... one can deduce

two compelling reasons for this, seemingly, radical volte face by the only Service which has shown unswerving commitment to indigenisation (lately labelled ‘Make in India’) for the past six decades”.

As he continued: “Firstly, by exercising a foreclosure option, the IN has administered a well-deserved and stinging rebuke to the Defence Research & Development Organisation for its lethargic and inept performance that has again disappointed our military. The second reason arises from the navy’s desperate hurry to freeze the specifications of its second indigenous aircraft carrier (labeled IAC-2). The choice of configuration, size and propulsion of a carrier has a direct linkage with the type of aircraft that will operate from it. This constitutes a ‘chicken and egg’ conundrum -- should one freeze the carrier design first or choose the aircraft first? The IN has, obviously decided the latter”.

To the public at large, this was perplexing as some “knowledgeable”



*LCA Navy (NP-2) comes in to land (photo ADA)*