

“Augmenting fighter squadrons top priority”

VAYU Interview with

**Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa,
Chief of the Air Staff, IAF**



In this composite picture, Air Chief Marshal BS Dhanoa, the CAS IAF is seen with the six fighter types currently in operational service with the IAF : MiG-21, MiG-27, MiG-29, Jaguar, Mirage 2000 and Su-30MKI

VAYU: *You have repeatedly flagged the issue of IAF’s falling fighter numbers. Are the combination of Rafale, Light Combat Aircraft and the proposed ‘Make in India’ single-engine fighter assessed as sufficient to address this quantitative shortfall in the near-to- medium term? Kindly elucidate on mitigating strategies in place, given the present geo-political scenario and palpable concern about threats on both the western and north eastern borders.*

CAS: Our focus is on required *Capability Development* to counter a two front threat. The IAF is prepared 24x7 for any threat and is ready for a befitting response to any contingency. The IAF has already proposed a roadmap to the MOD for induction of fighter aircraft to build up to the sanctioned strength of 42 fighter squadrons and also modernisation. Augmenting the strength of our fighter squadrons is our top priority. To achieve this, the IAF is looking at new inductions and mid-life upgrades. Towards this, MiG-29, Jaguar and Mirage 2000 aircraft are being upgraded in a phased manner to enhance their combat capability.

Weapon shortfalls are being made good. The induction of fighter aircraft contracted for includes the Light Combat Aircraft, Rafale and the balance of Su-30MKI aircraft. Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) has also been granted for procurement of LCA Mk.1A. Further, the Government of India plans to procure fighter aircraft through the ‘Strategic Partnership’ model and other suitable options are also being considered to ensure that the IAF attains

the authorised strength of fighter squadrons. If all the inductions take place as planned, the IAF is expected to achieve its authorised strength of fighter squadrons by end of the 15th Plan (2032).

VAYU: *At what stage is the ‘Make in India’ single-engine fighter programme, and what steps remain before technical and commercial offers can be accepted, deliberated and acted upon?*



Tejas Light Combat Aircraft at Yelahanka