

Sharing the space : Tejas twin-seater takes off as Rafale twin-seater is prepared for flight



With ‘114’ on their minds !

MMRCA 2.0 reflected at Aero India 2019

Once more with feeling ! It is nearly a year since April 2018 when the IAF issued an RFI to procure 110 (actually 114) fighters of which 18 would be procured as flyaways and the balance to be built in India by a strategic partner/Indian production agency (SP/IPA). Three quarters of these would be single-seaters and the rest twin-seat aircraft. International companies who reportedly responded to the RFI are Boeing (F-18 Super Hornet) ; Lockheed Martin (F-16); Saab (Gripen); Dassault Aviation (Rafale), the European Consortium (Typhoon); Mikoyan (MiG-35) and Sukhoi (Su-35), the latter having newly entered the fray.

These 114 fighters are being described by officials of the Indian Air Force as “filling the gap” between the present and times ahead when the Indian Air Force starts receiving the LCA Mk.IA



and Mk.II in quantity (*see separate article on the Tejas*).

The hopeful contenders to meet the IAFs requirement for new fighters were at Aero India 2019, in one form or the other. While Dassault brought its Rafales and Lockheed Martin showed off their F-16s, the Swedes had a full scale mockup of the Gripen outside Hall ‘C’ which had long lines of visitors patiently waiting to take a look. Saab also had a Gripen simulator amongst their exhibition which too attracted much attention.

Eric Trappier, Chairman and CEO of Dassault Aviation (*photo on left*) was present at Aero India 2019 where three Rafales (a single-seat ‘C’ and two twin-