



2019

**AERO INDIA**

# The Year (Show) of the Tejas

**A**ero India 2019 meant many things to many people but surely top of the list was the show of India's light combat aircraft, the Tejas, which was not only dominant in the air, on the ground but, what's more, got its FOC certificate even as the earlier IOC variant was displayed with aplomb by service pilots during inauguration of the event on 20 February. In the composite image above, the logo of Aero India 2019 incorporates profile of the Tejas LCA, even as 'the real thing' carries out an aerial display over Yelahanka.

The FOC ceremony took place in full public view, near the limited series production eight (LSP-8) LCA Mk.I (KH 2018) on static display on 20 February when Air Chief Marshal BS Dhanoa, Chief of the Air Staff was handed over the facsimile certificate formally declaring 'Final Operational Clearance' (FOC) by Dr G Sathesh Reddy, Secretary Defence R&D and Chairman DRDO. The Air Chief was flanked by Defence Secretary Sanjay Mithra, Chairman/Managing Director HAL R Madhavan and Director Engineering Arup Chatterjee. Also, handed over was the 'Release to Service Document' (RSD) which formalises the capabilities, features and technologies that FOC standard Tejas has on induction to the IAF.

While FOC standard aircraft documentation have reportedly been given

to HAL to begin production of the next tranche of 20 LCAs after incorporation of key changes, the FOC confers key capabilities after the IOC which includes integration of beyond visual range (BVR) missiles, 'smart' air-to-ground weaponry, air-to-air refueling capability and general flight envelope expansion.

The Indian Air Force will begin receiving the Tejas FOC block aircraft from the last

quarter of 2019, and these will steadily equip No.18 Squadron which has been number plated for several years after phasing out of its earlier MiG-27MLs.

The first squadron with the Tejas is No.45 which has been operating IOC standard aircraft since July 2016 and had half a dozen aircraft on display at Aero India 2019. Their CO, Gp Capt Samrat Dhankhar, formerly flying MiG-21bisons,

