



LCA Mk.1 (FOC) (SP-21) (Photo: Deb Rana)

Indigenous Punch

13 January 2021 witnessed a landmark moment when the CCS approved procurement of an additional 83 indigenous LCA fighter aircraft.

In late 1983, the Light Combat Aircraft programme was launched as an indigenous effort to develop a fourth generation combat aircraft to meet future requirements of the Indian Air Force. The programme was the responsibility of the newly formed Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) in collaboration with HAL's Aircraft Research & Design Center (ARDC).

The LCA prototype made its maiden flight when TD 1 (KH2001) piloted by Wg Cdr Rajiv Kothiyal flew from Bangalore on 4 January 2001. The former Prime Minister of India Atal Bihari Vajpayee later named the LCA as *Tejas* (Radiance). A decade later, the LCA (LSP-4) achieved Initial Operating Clearance (IOC), making its maiden flight in June 2010.

The LCA programme has proceeded apace and currently there are two squadrons of the Tejas in service with the IAF No. 45 Squadron (*Flying Daggers*) at AFS Sular was declared active on 1 July 2016, while No. 18 Squadron (*Flying Bullets*) got its first Tejas on 27 May 2020.

Of the initial order of 40 LCA, 16 each are of IOC and FOC standard while the rest are twin-seater.



Line up of LCA Mk.1 (IOC) at AFS Sular(Photo: Manorama/PTI)