

VAYU Interview with

Air Chief Marshal Vivek Ram Chaudhari, Chief of the Air Staff, Indian Air Force



VAYU : *There is a lot of confusion on whether the IAF will go in for the LCA Mk.2 or MRFA. Are they separate programmes or will the IAF go in for both types?*

CAS: LCA Mk 2 and MRFA are separate programmes and IAF plans to induct both these fighter aircraft in a phased manner. The differences in the two plans are as explained below: -

(a) **LCA Mk 2**: LCA Mk 2 is a more capable and potent variant of the indigenous Tejas fighter aircraft (LCA). The IAF's Qualitative Requirements have been handed over to ADA for the LCA Mk 2, the

induction of which is likely to commence from 2030 onwards. On 31 August 2022, CCS has approved the D&D of the LCA Mk 2 programme. Initially, the IAF plans to place an order for six Sqns of the LCA Mk 2.

(b) **MRFA**: IAF plans to induct six squadrons of MRFA in a phased manner. It is studying the responses to the RFI issued in April 2018. The Air Staff Qualitative Requirements for the current proposal are being finalised prior to seeking Govt approval. The programme would be progressed under the 'Make in India' initiative of DAP-2020, with a focus on a substantial transfer of key technologies to an Indian Production Partner.



Su-30MKIs and C-130J Hercules

VAYU : *Can you update us on the current UAV status: are the current ones operated by the IAF being upgraded and what are the acquisition programmes across UAV platforms, ie, small, large, MALE/HALE, loitering munitions etc?*

CAS: The IAF has prepared a roadmap for induction of RPAs to meet both the short term and long term operational requirements by addressing the limitations of the existing RPAs. The plan includes various types of RPA systems ranging from Small Drones and Counter Drone systems to the MALE and HALE class of RPAs, including those having an offensive capability.

Upgrade of a select fleet of UAVs to possess a weapon capability is being progressed, the case for which is at an advanced stage.

Efforts are being made to indigenously design and develop RPAs to meet the stated requirement. Work is also on for the development of armed Drone technology by DRDO. As far as Loitering Munitions are concerned, we are working with many companies in the private sector and have seen good progress.

