

India, France Solidify ₹61,000 Crore Fighter Jet Engine Collaboration



India has significantly advanced its strategic defense partnership with France, with the Ministry of Defense recommending a joint development project for next-generation fighter jet engines. This mega project, valued at an estimated ₹61,000 crore (approximately 7.3 billion USD), is a crucial step towards India's long-standing goal of self-reliance in advanced aerospace manufacturing and design, a strategic priority strongly advocated by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

The collaboration will see India and France jointly develop a 120-kilonewton (kN) thrust engine, specifically designed to power India's future combat platforms, most notably the indigenous Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA). This move comes after an extensive consultative process that included detailed input from stakeholders and a comprehensive assessment by a high-level technical committee. The committee evaluated proposals from both France's Safran and the UK's Rolls-Royce, ultimately concluding that Safran's offer presented the most beneficial terms for India's strategic interests. A key factor in this decision was Safran's commitment to complete technology transfer, which aligns with India's pursuit of strategic autonomy in defense manufacturing.

Currently, all fighter aircraft in India's fleet operate with engines of foreign origin, making engine procurement and maintenance a substantial portion of overall fighter jet costs. Conservative projections indicate India will require over 250 next-generation engines within the coming decade to meet its expanding air force requirements. While the first batch of AMCA aircraft will initially utilize US-manufactured GE 414 engines, this joint development with France will run in parallel, aiming for an indigenous power plant for future variants.

India's previous efforts to develop its fighter jet engine, under the "Kaveri" project by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), did not achieve the required thrust parameters for advanced fighter aircraft. This new partnership with France represents a renewed and intensified push for indigenous engine capability. As one defense expert noted, "Mastering fighter jet engine technology is a significant hurdle, and this partnership provides a clear pathway for India to achieve true self-reliance in this critical domain."

The agreement with Safran, which includes a development roadmap synchronized with the AMCA's timeline, signifies a deepening of the strategic ties between India and France in the defense sector. This collaboration is set to bring advanced design, manufacturing capabilities, and critical know-how directly to India, positioning the nation for a leading role in global propulsion engineering.