

# Lockheed to sweeten India's fighter jet bid with F-35 technology

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NEW DELHI: Lockheed Martin Corp. will provide latest combat jet technologies including a target tracking device aboard the F-16 aircraft that it plans to offer to India in its bid for the world's largest order from the Indian Air Force.

The global defence giant will offer jets equipped with the advanced radar which is fitted on its fifth-generation combat jet, the F-35, as well as a helmet-mounted tracking system and a new radio data link system, Vivek Lall, vice president for strategy and business development at Lockheed Martin said Wednesday.

The bid also comes with an offer to shift its lone production line for F-16s from Fort Worth, Texas in the US to India as it takes on competitors Saab AB and Boeing Co. The variant being pitched is the F-16 Block 70.

"There are a lot of technologies that come into the F-16 from F-35 and F-22, including the latest radar on these platforms," Lall said in an interview. "It is a contemporary, state-of-the-art platform."

Getting state-of-the-art fighters is crucial for Prime Minister Narendra Modi as the South Asian nation faces increased risks from neighboring Pakistan and China at a time when the Russian MiG jet -- India's mainstay -- is being phased out. As part of that plan, India sought proposals from global manufacturers for 110 combat planes, a deal worth at least \$15 billion.

## DEFENCE MODERNISATION

The jet order is an attempt to modernise the South Asian nation's defence forces, a plan which could cost as much as \$250 billion over a 10-year period ending 2025. And Modi wants a significant part of it to be done locally under his 'Make in India' campaign, which aims to promote domestic manufacturing.