

Open to helping India on Tejas, says Lockheed

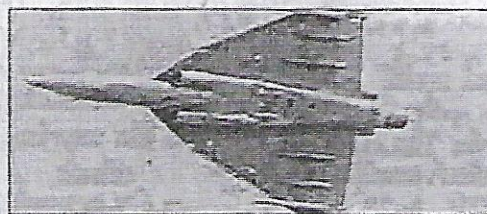
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AMERICA'S TOP FIGHTER jet manufacturer Lockheed has said it is open to helping India in production of the indigenously-designed light combat aircraft Tejas.

Currently, state-run Hindustan Aeronautics is producing around eight Tejas annually and the defence ministry wants it to increase the number to 18 planes every year. Tejas is a single-engine multi-role aircraft. It is the smallest and lightest multi-role supersonic fighter aircraft of its class.

Vivek Lall, vice president of strategy and business development for Lockheed Martin Aeronautics, said the company is open to helping India on Tejas. "Lockheed Martin has a strong record of successful international industrial partnerships, many of which happen to be directly related to the F-16," he said. "The F-16 is a proven force multiplier that would certainly complement the Tejas."

He said production of F-16 in India, as being proposed by Lockheed, will not only



put the country at the epicentre of a ₹165 billion fighter aircraft sustainment market but also the world's largest fighter aircraft ecosystem.

Lockheed, which has proposed to shift its entire F-16 manufacturing base to India, subject to it getting a major order from the Indian armed forces, argued that currently there are production opportunities for more than 400 such fighter jets globally. "Exclusive F-16 production will put India at the epicentre of a \$165 billion fighter aircraft sustainment market and the world's largest fighter aircraft ecosystem. The F-16 will also enable the Indian industry to establish new relationships with Lockheed Martin and other global industry leaders," Lall said.