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# India Shortlists Tata, L&T-BEL, and Bharat Forge-Led Groups for Fighter Jet Development

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India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has shortlisted three Indian industry contenders — Tata Advanced Systems Ltd, a consortium of Larsen & Toubro with Bharat Electronics Ltd, and a consortium led by Bharat Forge (with BEML Ltd and Data Patterns) — to design and develop prototypes for India's indigenous fifth-generation Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) programme. This selection follows a screening of seven bidders and marks a major step in India's push for advanced aerospace manufacturing.

## **About the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) Programme**

The AMCA is envisioned as a fifth-generation stealth fighter — a single-seat, twin-engine aircraft with stealth coatings, internal weapons bays, and advanced avionics, aimed at achieving high manoeuvrability and low detectability.

The aircraft is designed to strengthen the Indian Air Force's (IAF) capabilities and reduce dependence on foreign suppliers for cutting-edge combat jets.

If successful, India would join a selective group of countries operating indigenous fifth-generation fighters such as the F-22 and F-35 (USA), J-20 (China), and Su-57 (Russia).

## **Significance of Private Sector Participation**

The shortlisting of major Indian private sector firms for the AMCA prototype phase reflects a policy shift towards leveraging industry expertise and scaling up defence manufacturing under 'Make in India' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiatives.

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This marks a departure from traditional reliance on public sector units such as Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) — which has not been shortlisted at this stage due to eligibility criteria and high order books — making this a historic move in India's defence production ecosystem.

### **Project Timeline and Scope**

The shortlisted industry groups will receive government funding support to build and test prototype models of the AMCA, before full manufacturing rights are granted.

The first prototypes are slated for development over the next several years, with induction of operational jets into the IAF expected by 2035 or later.

Earlier defence ministry sources noted an indicative budget of ₹15,000 crore for prototype development alone.

### **Wider Strategic and Defence Context**

Strengthening indigenous fighter development is part of India's broader modernisation of its armed forces, which also includes acquisition of 114 Rafale fighter jets from France and additional P-8I maritime patrol aircraft for the Indian Navy.

India's Air Force is striving to increase operational readiness and maintain technological parity in the region amidst evolving security scenarios.

The AMCA project is a key pillar in achieving defence self-reliance, aligning with other initiatives like developing domestic fighter jet engine capabilities and integrating private industry in high-end aerospace manufacturing.