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Su-57 Emerges as Fastest Stealth Fighter Option for Indian Air Force Amid AMCA Delay

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According to defence sources, the Russian Su-57 stealth fighter is currently considered the quickest available option for the Indian Air Force (IAF) to rapidly gain fifth-generation stealth combat capability. At the same time, officials stressed that Rafale fighter jets will continue to remain extremely important for India's air power needs.



Why is the Su-57 Being Discussed??

The discussion comes as:

stealth fighter aircraft are becoming more common in India's neighbourhood, especially with reports of Pakistan moving towards acquiring Chinese stealth jets.

India's indigenous AMCA (Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft) programme is still under development and may take several more years before full induction.

Because of this, defence experts believe:

the Su-57 could act as a faster interim stealth solution for the IAF.

What is the Su-57?

Su-57 is Russia's fifth-generation stealth multirole fighter aircraft.

Key Features

Stealth capability

Advanced radar-evading design

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Supermaneuverability

Long-range strike capability

Internal weapons bays

Advanced avionics and sensors

The aircraft was developed by: Sukhoi Design Bureau, Russia.

Why Rafale is Still Important

Rafale jets are still essential for the IAF, even if stealth fighters are added later.

Why?

Because Rafales provide strong 4.5-generation combat capability, can carry heavier external weapons, and are already integrated into India's air combat structure.

Experts said both stealth fighters and advanced 4.5-generation fighters will be needed together in future warfare.

Concern Over IAF Squadron Strength

The Indian Air Force is currently facing declining fighter squadron numbers.

Current Situation

IAF currently operates around 29 fighter squadrons

While sanctioned strength is 42 squadrons.

This gap has increased because older aircraft like:

MiG-21,

Jaguar,

MiG-29,

and Mirage-2000

are gradually retiring.

Rafale Expansion Plan

India is also moving ahead with plans to procure 114 additional Rafale fighter jets.

Important Points

Most aircraft are expected to be manufactured in India.

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Initial aircraft may arrive in fly-away condition from France.

Deliveries could begin around 2030, if agreements are finalised on time.

India's Indigenous AMCA Programme

India is simultaneously developing:

AMCA (Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft)

Objective: To build India's own fifth-generation stealth fighter.

Expected Timeline: Prototype flight expected around 2028–29

Series production may begin around 2035.

Officials stressed that:

any possible Su-57 acquisition would not replace indigenous programmes,

but may serve as a temporary capability bridge.