

HAL, Russian co join hands to make SJ-100 aircraft in India

CMD: Will Roll Out Semi Knock-Down Planes In 3 Years

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Typically with 87-108 seats, SJ-100 is a high-tech commercial aircraft that is currently operated by nine Russian airlines

foreign state operators.

United Aircraft Corporation (UAC) said the agreement will serve as the basis for further cooperation between the companies. The document specifies that HAL will assist UAC in the certification and validation process for the Superjet-type certificate in India. HAL will be granted a licence to manufacture and sell SJ-100, including components, parts and spare parts necessary for the aircraft's maintenance and repair. UAC, in turn, will assist HAL in organising and re-equipping its production facilities for SJ-100 production through consulting, design services, and the involvement of specialists.

"The signing of this agreement marks an important step toward concluding a general agreement, which will outline the roadmap, timeframe, financial indicators, and a detailed breakdown of the respective workloads of the parties," UAC said.

India's public sector aerospace major Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) and Russia's United Aircraft Corporation (part of Rostec State Corporation) have signed a deal for cooperation in the production of Superjet 100 (SJ-100) commercial aircraft in the country.

The signing ceremony took place on the sidelines of the Wings India international aviation exhibition in Hyderabad, Russian agency TASS reported. Under this agreement, HAL will licence-produce the twin-engine, narrow-body jets, supporting the 'Make in India' initiative, aiming at reducing import dependency for regional connectivity.

HAL CMD D K Sunil told reporters in Hyderabad on Wednesday that the company is aiming to start the roll-out of semi knock-down SJ-100 aircraft in its existing facilities in the next three years.

He said the company aims to achieve 25% of its revenues from the civil aviation vertical in the next 10 years from the existing 4-5%. "In the next year or so, we can get in about 10 aircraft," Sunil

said, adding, "we see a good market of upwards of 200 aircraft for this size of India."

With typically seats between 87 and 108, SJ-100 is a high-tech commercial aircraft created using cutting-edge technologies in the field of aerodynamics, power plant and aircraft systems that ensure the high-level performance. The aircraft is currently operated by nine Russian airlines and by a number of Russian and

'Large US naval force moving toward Iran'

WASHINGTON, Jan 28 (IANS)

PRESIDENT Donald Trump said a large US naval force is moving toward the Middle East amid tensions with Iran, adding that Washington hopes military force will not be needed but is prepared if diplomacy fails.

In a radio interview with WABC host Sid Rosenberg, Trump said the deployment was aimed at deterring further escalation and reinforcing US pressure on Tehran. "We have a big armada going over there right now," Trump said. He described the

warnings from Tehran. "Israel kind of replies in turn," Trump said, referring to recent developments that led Israel to shut its airspace temporarily.

Trump argued that American action had prevented a far worse outcome in the region. "I don't think you would have Israel," he said, asserting that without US intervention, the situation could have been catastrophic. He cited a critical period of negotiations and military readiness that helped avert disaster.

The President also said his administration had succeeded



force as "very powerful" and said it was larger than a recent US deployment linked to operations involving Venezuela.

In response to a question on the significant military buildup, Trump said the goal was to avoid conflict while maintaining leverage. "Hopefully, we won't have to use it," he said, without providing details on the size, location, or timeline of the deployment.

The President linked the move to what he described as ongoing threats from Iran and heightened tensions affecting Israel. He said US backing had given Israel confidence in the face of repeated

in securing the return of hostages and that the conflict remains linked to the administration. "We got the last of the hostages back," Trump said. "We got the last of the dead back today." He called the effort something many had said was impossible and said families had been desperate to recover their loved ones.

Trump said Iran remained central to US security concerns and suggested continued pressure was limiting Tehran's options. He did not announce any new diplomatic initiative but said US actions were aligned with broader regional stability.

Govt hopeful of US trade deal soon, EAM to visit US next wk

Critical Minerals Also On Agenda

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New Delhi: Following the India-EU free trade agreement (FTA), and with external affairs minister S Jaishankar headed to Washington next week, India is hopeful ongoing efforts for a successful conclusion of the bilateral trade deal with the US will also soon come to fruition.

While Jaishankar is visiting the US for a meeting on critical minerals that his counterpart Marco Rubio is hosting on Feb 4 with partner countries of the US, the minister will also have a bilateral meeting with his counterpart Marco Rubio during which issues related to trade are expected to come up.

According to sources, Indian authorities and their US counterparts remained engaged over the deal, even



File photo

EAM Jaishankar met with a US congressional delegation in Delhi Sunday

while India was putting final touches on the FTA with EU.

"The two sides remain in touch on that (US deal). I think even during the time that we were in final stages of negotiating this deal (EU FTA), the trade negotiators were in touch with their US counterparts as well. So, that work is continuing and we are hopeful of a positive outcome on that front as well," said a source, speaking on condition of anonymity.

India and the US committed to negotiating a bilateral trade deal as far back as Feb

2025, but have not been able to seal it even after multiple rounds of negotiations. According to Indian govt, both sides came close to a balanced and mutually beneficial deal on several occasions before talks fizzled out. Earlier this month, the govt stressed it remained interested in a mutually beneficial trade deal between two complementary economies and looked forward to concluding it.

Jaishankar's visit might also see some discussions on the US invitation to India to join Pax Silica, a US-led ini-

tiative to build a secure, prosperous, and innovation driven silicon supply chains, from critical minerals and energy to AI and semiconductors. US ambassador to India Sergio Gor had extended an invitation to India to join the initiative on his first day in office earlier this month.

Talking about the FTA with EU, sources also said that the WTO-oriented system was under stress, forcing countries to find deals wherever they could with important trading partners. "The US market is as important, if not more. And we therefore have to keep our eyes on the ball there in terms of wanting to get that trade deal across the finish line as well," said a source, while strongly denying that the FTA with the EU was a knee-jerk reaction to any lack of progress in other deals being discussed.

"We had been at it (EU FTA) for a long time. The decisive moment was the visit of EU College of Commissioners last year when there was political guidance to get the deal done," the source added.

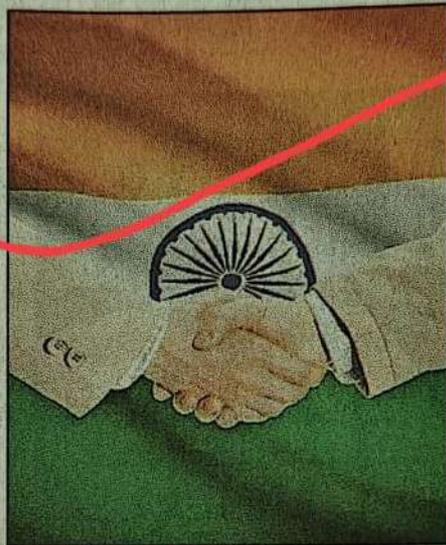
From Thailand to EU deal: India's evolving FTA journey

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New Delhi: India has come a long way from the early days of its journey towards FTAs, which really began with an “early harvest scheme” with Thailand that had limited coverage of under 100 products. The duty concessions to the South East Asian country meant that companies such as Honda and Sony began importing gear boxes and TV sets, instead of producing them locally, putting govt on the defensive.

What followed was a “careful calibration” with the govt refusing to cut duties on “sensitive sectors” such as wine and spirits and automobiles. The fear was that domestic manufacturing would be hurt and grape farmers would be adversely impacted. In any case, anything to do with farmers was a no-go zone.

Things began to change with an interim deal with Australia in 2022, which followed India's decision to walk out of RCEP, the regional grouping led by China. For the first time, govt showed boldness in lowering tariffs for wine above a specified value but sought to win over local producers by assuring technical support from their competitors. It also tested the quota system, offering concessions on some farm prod-



1Stock

TRADE EVOLUTION

ucts, but for limited quantities.

With every trade deal, the list got longer. So, in came chocolates and watches in the pact with European Free Trade Association, comprising Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. Similarly, trade-offs started going beyond goods and services — something that the govt failed to do in Asean FTA — to include investment promises as EFTA committed a fresh FDI of \$100 billion.

By the time govt finalised its agreement with EU, eighth in four years, barring cereals, pulses, dairy and genetically modified food, the red channel list became much shorter with the Indian negotiators learning to make trade-offs.

So, if duty was slashed on French or Spanish wine, it was

done in return for allowing limited quantities of grapes to European markets. Similarly, pears and apples were allowed, but in limited quantities and with features such as a minimum import price, ensuring that the landed cost of apples does not fall below Rs 96 a kg.

The benefits are also in line with the opportunity that a market offers. Govt decided against offering any concessions to British electric vehicles when it finalised the FTA last May. But eight months later, it offered a limited number of EVs as part of the EU deal.

“Every FTA stands on its own foot,” commerce minister Piyush Goyal said on Tuesday.

The change in approach is also visible in the so-called “new issues”, earlier called non-trade issues by Indian negotiators, being part of the trade engagement. So, the “modern FTAs” include intellectual property rights, SMEs, digital trade, labour and environment, but the commitments have not extended beyond what India has committed at international forums, addressing concerns around patent laws being diluted.

“It is how you negotiate these issues. We are firm on certain aspects and we will stick to them in our other engagements as well,” a senior official said.