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Aero India 2025: Runway for Indian Strategic Technological Take-off

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The 15th Edition of Aero India 2025, Asia's largest biennial air show and aviation exhibition in Asia, will be organised from February 10 to 14 at the Yelahanka Air Force Station in the IT city - Bengaluru. The AF Station successfully managed every Aero India edition since 1996. Aero India 2025 will showcase a significant aerospace defence trade exhibition while the Indian Air Force (IAF) and other participants will perform aerial displays. SU-57Es and F-35s will be attractive for all.¹

Plethora of Academic Handshakes

The event will see Global stakeholders, academic representatives, and the think tank community interacting and brainstorming with practitioners and aerospace company personnel for product developments. Members from worldwide aerospace companies will participate in this event. People get an opportunity at Aero India to exchange knowledge about aviation industry improvements, industrial capabilities and current market developments. The event strengthens both the 'Make in India' initiative and domestic aviation industry development.²

The first three days of the five-day event will be designated as business days. It is organised by the Defence Exhibition Organisation, Department of Defence Production, Ministry of Defence. It will feature a significant trade exhibition of the aerospace and defence sector, as well as aerial displays by the IAF and other participants. Global aerospace companies in the industry will send representatives to this event.

Fostering Indian Aerospace Domain

Aero India delivers unique possibilities for people to share information about aviation sector advancements, industry concepts, and recent industry developments. The event will enhance both the 'Make in India' programme and the development of the domestic aviation industry. The indigenous defence manufacturing, as an outcome of the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' mission of the government, will be exhibited. Self-reliance endeavours in the defence sector will result in a reduction in dependence on international imports. Various start-ups, Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME) and Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSU) will actively display their capabilities at the event as the country proves its advancement in developing state-of-the-art military equipment.

The event establishes a platform to display India's defence capabilities and supports globalisation efforts while advancing local defence production. Aero India 2025 will serve as a platform to achieve multiple strategic goals to strengthen India's military readiness against any

threat. Aero India serves as an exceptional chance for India to demonstrate its domestic defence abilities while drawing sector foreign investment and building needed defence relationships.

The current geopolitical framework in the region demands that India strengthen its defensive capabilities. A comprehensive national security plan needs to be enunciated as China remains aggressive in the Indo-Pacific and Pakistan continues to face economic instability and political unrest. In addition, China is inducting state-of-the-art aerial platforms like the sixth generation J-36, J-20, warships, and UAS.³ The modernisation of the IAF is the primary purpose behind Aero India. Operational superiority demands from the IAF require next-level fighter aircraft, helicopters and UAVs. Aero India functions as a display platform for possible acquisitions and technologies that defence companies use to negotiate deals during events. Next-generation fighter aircraft evaluation, air-to-air refuelling, and cyber warfare systems assessments constitute this group of tasks. Indigenous defence system development will speed up from this event, reducing foreign dependency and enhancing national self-sufficiency in defence.

It is natural for indigenous development, corresponding with the 'Make in India' initiative, to promote domestic manufacturing and innovation. The event depends on major technological partners to succeed, and the formation of sustainable business agreements that strengthen India's defence manufacturing capabilities.

Technological advancements are just a part of Aero India. In actuality, the event can help build strategic partnerships. The event is a forum for advanced discussions and negotiations with potential defence partners. It means increasing ties with nations like the US, Russia and France, as well as with other countries with similar security interests. They could involve technology transfer, collaborative research and development or co-production of defence systems. Increasingly close collaboration between the IAF and the US in the area of advanced fighter and UAV technology will significantly improve the capabilities of the IAF. It would enhance India's defence preparedness by improving intelligence gathering and surveillance technology with Israel, along with collaborating with Israel on the matter.

The strategic partnerships between countries will become stronger through the advancements of Aero India 2025. Through its platform, the event allows high-level talks and partnership negotiations with potential defence partners. The event provides opportunities to enhance current defence relations with the United States, France, Russia and Israel, and establish new alliances among nations that share security priorities. Strategic alliances between countries include exchanges of technology together with common research programmes and joint defence system production activities. When the IAF works closely with the United States to develop

advanced fighter technology and UAV systems, it will achieve major capability growth. Establishing stronger connections between India and Israel for surveillance capabilities and intelligence-sharing capacities will enhance overall national defence readiness.

Diplomatic initiatives will be essential for turning opportunities into benefits through the 2025 edition of Aero India. Through its air show programme, India establishes diplomatic dialogue with other nations, facilitating mutual understanding and building trust among nations. Multiple defence authorities from different countries participate in events that trigger mutual dialogues about local security threats and cooperative ventures. India demonstrates its defence capabilities at the showcase to let adversaries understand its dedication to protecting its national interests. The defensive presence enables regional stability through its ability to prevent aggressive behaviour while building a secure balance in the security sector.

Impetus must be given to convert available opportunities into benefits through diplomatic initiatives. Relevant measures must be initiated to provide a conducive environment for all stakeholders to operate smoothly. Indian government officials must be forthcoming to convert brainstorming sessions into an opportunity to strengthen the Indian defence ecosystem. India estimates that the diplomatic dialogue with other nations through its air show programme will foster understanding as well as trust between nations. Representatives of defence bodies from several countries participate in event, which drive bilateral discussions of regional security challenges and potentially collaborative efforts for capability development.

For Aero India 2025 to succeed in delivering on its strategic objectives, a number of key enablers must be realised. The main goal is to earn significant international participation. We must do this primarily and, in particular, must make efforts to promote this event and highlight its benefits to participant nations.' The logistics systems of large-scale events must to be controlled for successful delivery. This event forces us to ensure that the participants are fully protected. Deals made at events have to be enforced to accomplish the objectives.

Conclusion

Aero India 2025 provides a unique opportunity for India to enhance defence capabilities by working on challenge sets across the Eastern and Western defence sectors. Technological evolution and innovation, presented through international commercial partnerships and diplomatic initiatives at the event, will further help India to be Atmanirbhar on the path to superior operational preparedness, strengthening national security in the context of a complex and evolving geopolitical environment.

The dividends of this event depend on the professional and meticulous execution coupled with the capitalisation of the huge potential of Indian defence capability creation.

Notes:

¹ D Peri, "Russian, U.S. fifth generation fighter jets at Aero India," *The Hindu*, January 29, 2025, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/russian-us-fifth-generation-fighter-jets-at-aero-india/article69152033.ece>. Accessed on February 6, 2025.

² Department of Defence Production, "Why Visit Aero India 2025?," <https://www.aeroindia.gov.in/whyvisit>. Accessed on February 3, 2025.

³ Anil Chopra, "USAF vs PAAF: U.S. "Downplays" China's Air Combat Capability; Can 6th-Gen "J-36" Change the Game?," *The Eurasian Times*, December 28, 2024, <https://www.eurasiantimes.com/pentagon-downplays-chinas-plaaf-combat/>. Accessed on January 31, 2025.

