

PROF. M. G. K. MENON: Sir, it is Videocon. (Interruptions)

SHRI KAMAL MORARKA: As I said, it is a private company. (Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: The second question is, is it the normal procedure that you write to the collaborators to find out, as, you say, it was done in this case? (Interruptions)

PROF. M. G. K. MENON: I will have this looked into.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He will have this looked into. (Interruptions) Question No. 204.

Negotiations with a French firm regarding Light Combat Aircraft

204. SHRI KAPIL VERMA:†
KUMARI ALIA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state—

(a) what is the total amount of money spent so far on the Light Combat Aircraft Project; and

(b) whether it is a fact that negotiations are going on with a French firm for a major collaboration in the Light Combat Aircraft project and if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (DR. RAJA RAMANNA): (a) A sum of Rs. 273 crores has been spent so far on the Light Combat Aircraft Project.

(b) No negotiations are going on with a French firm for a major collaboration. However, negotiations are in progress with one French firm for availing technical consultancy and procuring certain sub-systems/components. It is not in public interest to disclose the details of such negotiations before they are concluded.

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Kapil Verma.

SHRI KAPIL VERMA: This prestigious project...

SHRIMATI MARGARET ALVA: Why are they not disclosing the details? They are saying that it is an open Government, nothing is to be hidden.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But you do not want defence things to be opened up.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Now they are telling that they are not disclosing. This is the Government which says that it is for the people of this country.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But it comes under defence category.

SHRIMATI MARGARET ALVA: Was not Bofors coming under defence category?

SHRI SURESH KALMADI: On Bofors they wanted to know everything. Why can't they give details now? Why do they want to keep back the details in this case?

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: It is only the details of negotiations that we want.

DR. RAJA RAMANNA: Sir, I think the answer has not been clearly understood. May I read out the last para again? It is said: "It is not in public interest to disclose the details of such negotiations before they are concluded." We do not even know whether these things are going through. At this stage we cannot disclose them. When the things come up...

SHRI SURESH KALMADI: Will you disclose them later on?

SHRI SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY: Who is conducting the negotiations, Mr. Arun Nehru or the Minister concerned?

SHRI KAPIL VERMA: Sir, the Minister is taking shelter behind public interest but here I have excerpts from

Jane's Defence Weekly from England. It carries all the details about this. However, I will not take time of the House. What I want to say is this prestigious project was started in 1983 and it was to cost Rs. 600 crores. It was to be completed within 8 to 10 years but it has been greatly delayed. I want to know what progress has been made so far, what stage has been reached in it and with which countries the negotiations are going on. Also, I want to know what are the reasons for delay? Part (b) of my question is, in this very House on the 19th May, 1989 the then Defence Minister in reply to my question had stated that no final decision has been taken as yet to start actual production, to go ahead with the project. Now I want to know from the new Government and the Defence Minister whether there is any change in it. What is the position now, whether they have taken the final decision to go ahead with the project or not?

DR. RAJA RAMANNA: I can certainly answer all these questions but it will take a long time. However, let me first say that the LCA project was conceived many years ago to bring this country up to the forefront of aeronautic development in the world. The Hon. Member will remember that the last effort at indigenising aircraft design was with the HF24. After that there has been no design input and it was at this stage that in the early 80s it was decided that we should go in for a very sophisticated aircraft as required by the Airforce so that we would not be found wanting towards the end of this decade and in the next century. This is the reason for this. Now the project has been analysed to see what technology you require so that you can be in the forefront of aeronautic technology. I could mention a few identified areas, such as, advanced aero-dynamic concepts, unstable configuration with fly-by-wire control system; extensive use of composite materials; advanced cockpit design, with advanced avionics systems, multi-mode pulse doppler radar; fuel efficient and state of the art technology power

plant. Now, as I told you, we have slipped in the earlier years going back to earlier than 1970, to keep in touch with these things. Now we have been forced, besides our own contribution to the LCA, to depend a little bit on the know-how from foreign countries, like the USA in the case of engine, like France in certain other aspects. And I would like to mention that the most difficult part of an aircraft of the type of LCA is the engine part. We have been developing GTX for a long time, but to fit it into a small aircraft which will be used in forward areas, we have evaluated many other foreign engines as a possibility. One of them is the agreement with the USA to get a few F-404 engines along with the associated hardware and instruments. This is only to get it so that we can independently build our own engines at a suitable time so that it becomes a truly indigenous project.

I would like to tell the Hon. Members the milestones of the LCA project. I just mentioned one aspect of the modern technology that we have to get. The other refers, of course, to the radar systems for which we may have to get some assistance from outside. But the milestones of the LCA project are as follows:

We got the 'go ahead' in 1985. In May 1985, the feasibility study was completed. In October, 1985, the issue of Air Staff Requirement was finalised because we have to work constantly with the User, because we may make some fancy changes and the user may not want it; so it is a very complex decision that has to take place with many people to agree to it.

In 1987, we signed a contract with the AMD-BA on the PDP consultancy and that was completed in 1988. The expected commencement of the Technology Demonstrator Phase will be July, 1990. In 1995, we expect the flight of the first flight vehicle. After that production will take place.

SHRI JAGESH DESAI: He wanted to know the stage of negotiation, at what stage it has reached.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY: Sir, have you permitted Mr. Jagesh Desai?

DR. RAJA RAMANNA: I did not quite get the question.

SHRI SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY: He wants to know whether these will transport nuclear weapons or not.

DR. RAJA RAMANNA: Sir, I am only answering supplementaries to this question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He is a Vice-Chairman, but that does not mean you can jump up any time. You are not a jumping jet.

SHRI KAPIL VERMA: Sir, the hon. Minister has not replied to my supplementaries about the stage of negotiations, the progress made, the ultimate cost and when it will be completed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He has said, by 1995.

SHRI KAPIL VERMA: Is it a fact that the Soviet Union has offered, as a substitute to this project, upgradation of Mig-21 by induction of the latest engine avionics and other materials from Mig-29? What is the Government's reaction to it? Has the Government also considered the French offer of actual participation in the Rafel project?

Part (b) of my question is, the Indian Air Force, the fourth largest in the world, is in great need of an advanced jet trainer for training. Now the French have offered Alpha and there is Hawk also from the U.K. Has the Government considered these two alternatively and taken any decision?

DR. RAJA RAMANNA: With reference to the question that has been raised, the supplementary that has been asked is about Mig-29, whether that will do the job compared to LCA.

SHRI SURESH KALMADI: No, it is Mig-21.

DR. RAJA RAMANNA: It is upgradation of Mig-21 to Mig-29, if I understood him correctly.

SHRI SURESH KALMADI: No, no, he has asked about modifying Mig-21 into the LCA role.

DR. RAJA RAMANNA: Correct. But our aim and the whole LCA philosophy has been to find a new design capability in the country to satisfy Indian conditions, availability of Indian material and all the research that has been done in the various fields of aeronautics. It is not simply buying another one—of course we can buy any other one and pay a lot of money; and these are very very expensive to buy from outside—without getting the basic knowledge. The main essence of the LCA is that we must eventually be able to design, construct and produce the aircraft in the country. The MIGs have certainly assisted us in bringing a very powerful air potential, but that does not answer the basic question.

SHRI KAPIL VERMA: Are you considering an advanced jet trainer like Rafel or Hawk?

DR. RAJA RAMANNA: These matters are under discussion in the Air Force and in the Ministry.

SHRI SURESH KALMADI: Sir, the Minister just now said that after the HF-24 the country has not manufactured another aircraft. He is quite right. We have had a 20-year technological gap in the manufacture of aircraft and, all of a sudden, we want to manufacture the most modern and sophisticated aircraft in the world. Is it possible? We have already spent Rs. 250 crores.... (Interruptions) ... Please sit down.

DR. RAJA RAMANNA: Is it a longish question?

SHRI SURESH KALMADI: No, it is not at all long. I have just started... (Interruptions)...

SHRI SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY : Sir, you must educate the Minister that he should get up to answer only when you call him to answer.

SHRI SURESH KALMADI : All other countries in the world start with a basic aircraft. A basic, advanced jet trainer is the need of this country, and you keep improving the model. But here we want to manufacture a most advanced aircraft.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Put your question, please.

SHRI SURESH KALMADI : The Minister has just now stated that our engine is under development. I want to know what is the state of the GTX engine. You have gone in for F-404 engine as a stop-gap. Will the USA continue to supply us more than 12 engines? I know because, with our history of aircraft production, our engine will not be ready on time. You will have the aircraft but you will not have the engine. And the United States of America, at that time, will hold you to ransom and will not give you a single engine more. I want to know what is the state of the engine. Has it come up to the required power which it was scheduled to? I want to know what was the original cost of this project, the time schedule of the project and whether this aircraft is ever going to see squadron service.

DR. RAJA RAMANNA : Sir, can I answer the question?

SHRI SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY : The Minister can always plead secrecy.

DR. RAJA RAMANNA : Sir, because Mr. Subramanian Swamy has trained me in the past not to answer a question any time without the permission of the Chair, I would like to have the permission of the Chair. . . . (Interruptions) . . . With your permission, Sir, I can answer some parts of the question because it is rather a longish question as he has already warned me. The question was whether we can go in for a most advanced aircraft all of a sudden. Now, this aircraft was first thought of in 1982 when I myself was a Scientific Adviser.

SHRI SURESH KALMADI : Is it your brainchild?

DR. RAJA RAMANNA : It is part of my thinking but not my child. Children come much later. . . (Interruptions)

SHRI SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY : Is the engine of the LCA a Draupadi?

DR. RAJA RAMANNA : If I can use the same analogy, children do not just drop suddenly like that. It has got to be designed, our capability examined and, finally, have some collaboration with some foreign countries because we know that in certain aspects of the technology we are not that wonderful. But we may get up to the best, and my own experience of previous projects shows that whenever an effort has been put on any big project, however advanced it is, people in India are capable of doing it.

SHRI SURESH KALMADI : Do it. But what is the fate of our aircraft projects? . . . (Interruptions) . . . what is the aircraft? In the airlines? What about Kiran? . . . (Interruptions) . . . Have you got the capability? You want the most modern aircraft, you spend Rs. 3,000 crores and then you import the engine. . . (Interruptions).

MR. CHAIRMAN : Is it "Argument Hour" or Question Hour?

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH : What does he want? Does he want to buy from abroad and get kickbacks? Ask him. Do you not want indigenous production?

SHRI SURESH KALMADI : You produce a small aircraft first, not a sophisticated one.

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH : You speak out whether you want indigenous production or not.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The Minister is capable of answering. He does not need your help. (Interruptions)

DR. RAJA RAMANNA : Let me continue the answer. We want to get an aircraft as advanced and as capable of further advancement in the forefront of aeronautic design. It is not just off like that. It is going to take several years to do this. As I told you, starting from 1983 up to 1995 is the time of development, and after this, production we will have to start. So, that gives you a rough idea that it is not all of a sudden.

I have not come prepared to answer questions on the HAL. I believe India is capable of being in the forefront of modern design when special effort is made, I would like to reiterate with my experience. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI SURESH KALMADI : My specific question was on engine. I want your protection. I specifically asked what the state of the indigenous production of the engine is. What will happen if the F-404 engines are not given by the United States in case the engine is not developed in time. I want an answer to that.

SHRI SUKOMAL SEN : Do you want production (*Interruptions*)

DR. RAJA RAMANNA : Answering the supplementaries, the first thing I referred to was the engine problem. The engine is a very difficult thing to develop. The GTX was started a long time ago to get necessary experience of how to develop an engine. That is why we are trying to get some know how from the United States, and from our experience of servicing the MiG engines I believe it is quite possible for this country to get to the modern engine technology. I am quite certain about it.

PROF. C. LAKSHMANNA : Mr. Chairman, Sir, the project has been in the offing for the last eight years almost, and also a sum of Rs. 273 crores has been spent. I think suddenly they have woken up, and they are saying that there is delay etc. That is beside the point. But the question is, it is good that there is no negotiation, no major negotiation with any French firm and that it is only for

sub-systems. My question is : In case there is a difficulty for the sub-systems, have we also been developing through R&D for meeting such contingency if there is any failure ? If that is the case, how long further it will take for us to realise a very important project like the LCA ? Will it be by 1995 or even later even if there has been some failure with regard to the negotiations which we are having for the sub-systems and components with France or any other country ? Therefore, I would like to know from the Minister what alternate R&D developments have been taking place, and whether, if that is to happen, we are in a position to cope with the situation and then have an LCA project which is a very desirable thing so that we can strengthen our force.

DR. RAJA RAMANNA : Sir, I would like to answer this. The whole project is being done and if we fail in some aspects, something else holds it up, that is why we are having a series of consultancy programmes and also the ADA, Aeronautics Development Agency has been created only to examine this problem together with the various aeronautic establishments in the country.

Review of the Narora Atomic Power Project

***205. SHRI RAM NARESH YADAV :** Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the Narora Atomic Power Project is likely to be reviewed from the security point of view;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the approval for commissioning the plant was issued in 1989 only for five years; and

(c) if so, what are the details in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN THE MINISTRY OF