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Saab & Tata To Develop Fighter Jet



Swedish aeronautics maker Saab has been building aircraft since 1937. Saab started making cars in the late 1940s and has now tied up with India's Tata group to develop a new variant of its Gripen fighter jet as it pitches for a 12-billion-dollar deal from New Delhi.

Saab executive Kjell Moller said the tie-up with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) was not only aimed at jointly developing the Gripen but also at getting a chance at the biggest fighter jet deal in the world in years. The Swedish company is competing with firms from Russia, Europe and the United States to sell 126 warplanes to the Indian air force.

India, which will begin trials in April of the shortlisted jets including the Gripen, has said it will buy about two dozen units in flyaway condition and manufacture the remaining 100 or so planes at a local state-run facility here.

"We will transfer technology and competencies to TCS, which will play a key role in the development of the next-generation Gripen and other products," Moller said ahead of the air show this week in Bangalore. "The contract will continue irrespective of us getting the Indian order," the Saab vice president said.

The Indian air force -- the fourth largest in the world -- has 51 Mirage-2000 war planes made by Dassault with electronics from Thales that need a major upgrade.

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