



HAL SEEKS NEW JOINT VENTURE PARTNER FOR 50-80 SEAT AIRCRAFT

News / Manufacturer



India's plans to develop a home-grown regional transport aircraft (RTA) appear to have been scrapped, with state owned airframer Hindustan Aeronautics (HAL) releasing a new request for information for the manufacture of a 50-80 seat dual-role regional aircraft in India.

The RFI follows an announcement last year that plans to develop the RTA in partnership with the Bangalore based, National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL) would not move ahead.

Instead, the airframer is now looking a new joint venture partner to produce a 50-80 seat regional aircraft, under the 'Make in India' initiative proposed by the government.

"Considering the current situation where a limited number of models of 50-80 seater aircraft are already developed and in service, HAL intends to form a joint venture in India with the OEM to

manufacture and supply 50-80 seater aircraft," says the RFI, for which responses need to be submitted by 11 April.

HAL has asked for an airplane not only capable of regular passenger and cargo operations but also have the ability to be configured for military roles such as: transport, maritime surveillance and electronic intelligence gathering.

The RFI asks for, "provision for a ramp door/sliding door option, bubble window radome etc" which could allow for air-drop operations.

The aircraft could be either a twin-engine turbofan or turboprop, with the ability to operate from short and semi-prepared runways.

HAL says that there should be adequate ground clearance for installation of radar/equipment in the aircraft belly for non-civil versions. The aircraft must also be capable of fitment with under-wing pylons for carriage of stores, including light armament and rocket pods etc, for military roles.

The military requirement is surprising, as Airbus Group has bid to produce the C295W in India together with Tata Advanced Systems to cater for the Indian air force requirement to replace its obsolete HAL-built HS-748 'Avro' transports. New Delhi's decision last May to proceed with the acquisition of 56 C295Ws to replace the Avros was the first instance where HAL would not participate in the local assembly of a military aircraft type for the nation's armed forces.

HAL has worked on two civilian transport types over the last five decades: producing 89 Avros between 1964 and 1984, followed by manufacture of the Dornier Do-228 passenger/utility aircraft from 1984. Only 22 Avros and 14 Do-228s were ever delivered to civilian customers.

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