

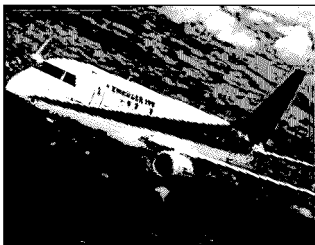
VIP jet deal under CAG scanner-

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Another defence deal is now apparently under the scanner. This time, a draft report prepared by Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has raised questions about the Rs 727-crore Embraer deal signed in 2003.

The draft CAG report, which will be tabled in parliament after it is finalised, apparently says that a huge amount of money was needlessly paid for acquiring the five plush Legacy EMB 135BJ Legacy jets for domestic travel of VVIPs. The deal was signed by the previous NDA regime with Brazilian firm Embraer in September 2003.

Defence ministry officials on Friday, however, brushed aside the allegations, holding that it was "routine" for CAG to demand clarifications from the government before finalising its report. "We submitted our answers for the Em-



**EMBRAER PLANES UNDER
A CLOUD**

braer deal in January itself," said an official.

TOI had earlier reported allegations about IAF's "original operational requirements" being changed in this VVIP jets' deal. Apart from the Legacy jets, the other contenders in the race were Gulfstream-V, Dassault Falcon 900 X, Bombardier BD-700 Global Express and Canadair CL-600 Challenger.

Four of the Legacy jets are now under the Palam-based Air HQ Communication Squadron of the IAF, which ferries the President, Vice-President, Prime Minister and foreign dignitaries within the country. The fifth one is with the BSF under the home ministry.

The UPA government last year also cleared the purchase of three Boeing Business Jets, with "self-protection suites" at a total cost of over Rs 1,000-crore. But these jets, meant for travel of President and PM abroad, will arrive in India only in January 2009.