

In self-reliance push, India clears military purchases worth ₹76,390 crore

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Under India's defence procurement rules, AoN by the council, headed by defence minister Rajnath Singh, is the first step towards buying military hardware. (HT PHOTO.)

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New Delhi: In the latest push to self-reliance in defence, India on Monday cleared the purchase of indigenous military hardware worth ₹76,390 crore to sharpen the country's combat capabilities with next-generation warships, wheeled armoured fighting vehicles with anti-tank guided missiles, weapon locating radars and bridge-laying tanks, the defence ministry announced.

The defence acquisition council (DAC) – India's apex procurement body – accorded its acceptance of necessity (AoN) for the capital acquisition proposals. Under India's defence procurement rules, AoN by the council, headed by defence minister Rajnath Singh, is the first step towards buying military hardware.

The proposals have been greenlit by DAC under acquisition categories that seek to promote self-reliance in the defence manufacturing sector.

"This will provide substantial boost to the Indian defence industry and reduce foreign spending significantly," the ministry said.

Next-generation corvettes for the navy will cost around ₹36,000 crore and will be used for surveillance missions, escort operations, search and attack, deterrence, and coastal defence, officials said.

"These corvettes will be based on a new in-house design of the Indian Navy using latest technology, and would contribute to further the government's initiative of SAGAR (Security and Growth for all in the Region)," the ministry said.

The other proposals cleared by DAC include the procurement of additional Dornier aircraft, Sukhoi-30 aero-engines and a project for digitisation in the coast guard.

India has imposed a phased ban on the import of 310 different types of weapons and systems, including next-generation corvettes, during the last two years to boost self-reliance.

The military hardware sought to be indigenised covers light weight tanks, naval utility helicopters, artillery guns, missiles, loitering munitions, missile destroyers, ship-borne cruise missiles, light combat aircraft, light transport aircraft, long-range land-attack cruise missiles, basic trainer aircraft, multi-barrel rocket launchers, assault rifles, sniper rifles, specified types of helicopters, and airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) systems.

The ongoing Russia-Ukraine crisis has exposed India's overwhelming dependence on imported weaponry, especially from Russia, and India's military and strategic planners are grappling with issues such as how the war could affect the country's military readiness, alternatives for sourcing military hardware and speeding up the indigenisation drive to become self-reliant.

The chief takeaways from the Russia-Ukraine conflict include the urgent need for diversification of weapon purchases, maximum possible indigenisation of spares and sub-systems to keep Russian-origin equipment serviceable, and, most importantly, staying laser-focused on achieving atmanirbharta (self-reliance) to meet India's growing defence needs, as previously reported.

Where will the money go?

Next-generation corvettes for a variety of naval missions

Specialist vehicles with anti-tank guided missiles

Weapon locating radars to detect hostile artillery

Tanks capable of launching bridges

More Dornier aircraft for maritime surveillance.