

India set to kick off 3 mega def projects worth ₹1.4L cr

Aircraft Carrier, 97 Tejas Jets, 156 Prachand Copters On List

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New Delhi: India is now set to give preliminary approval to three mega indigenous projects to manufacture another aircraft carrier, 97 more Tejas fighters and 156 Prachand light combat helicopters, which together will be worth around Rs 1.4 lakh crore.

The Rajnath Singh-led defence acquisitions council is likely to take up the 'acceptance of necessity' (AoN) — the first step in the procurement process — for the three crucial projects at a meeting slated on November 30, sources told **TOI** on Thursday.

Once the AoNs are accorded, the tendering and commercial negotiations will take place before the three deals are submitted to the Cabinet committee on security for the final nod.

All these projects, which will take several years to be executed, are critical for



The defence acquisitions council is likely to take the first step in the procurement process at a meeting on November 30, sources said

strengthening India's operational military preparedness in the backdrop of China's expanding multi-domain warfare capabilities.

The 97 Tejas Mark-1A fighters, at a cost of around Rs 55,000 crore, will add to the 83 such jets already ordered under the Rs 46,898 crore contract inked with Hindustan Aeronautics in 2021.

These 180 Tejas jets are critical for IAF to boost the

number of its fighter squadrons, which is down to just 31 when at least 42 are required to tackle China and Pakistan. The first 83 Mark-1A jets are slated for delivery in the February 2024-February 2028 time-frame.

It will take 8-10 years for the second indigenous aircraft carrier (IAC-2), in turn, to be built at the Cochin Shipyard for around Rs 40,000 crore as a "repeat

order" of the 44,000-tonne INS Vikrant or IAC-1.

INS Vikrant was commissioned in September 2022, after being built for around Rs 20,000 crore, but will be fully combat-ready only by mid-2024.

The Navy also has the older Russian-origin carrier INS Vikramaditya, the refurbished Admiral Gorshkov inducted in November 2013 under a \$2.33 billion deal with Russia.

The Navy currently has only 40 of the 45 MiG-29K jets, inducted from Russia for another \$2 billion, to operate from carriers. The twin-engine deck-based fighter being developed by DRDO is likely to take at least a decade to become fully operational.

The 156 Prachand helicopters (90 for Army, 66 IAF), capable of offensive operations in high-altitude areas like Siachen Glacier and eastern Ladakh, in turn, will cost around Rs 45,000 crore.