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First Rafale aircraft made for India takes flight

*First aircraft is named after Air Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria
Dinakar Peri*

As the political controversy over the Rafale fighter jet deal continues in India, manufacturing of the aircraft customised as per specifications of the Indian Air Force (IAF) is making progress.

The first aircraft built by Dassault Aviation for the IAF, a two-seater variant, made its maiden flight on October 30 in France and is designated RB 008, according to official sources.

“RB stands for Air Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria as he had a major role in the contract negotiations,” an official source said.

Air Marshal Bhadauria was the Deputy Chief of the IAF during the contract negotiations for 36 Rafale jets and is presently the Air Officer Commanding-In-Chief of the IAF’s Training Command. In September 2016, India and France signed a €7.87 billion Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) for 36 Rafale multi-role fighter jets in fly-away condition.

The surprise announcement for the 36 aircraft was made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a visit to Paris in April 2015, citing “critical operational necessity” of the IAF. RB 008 will be the 36th aircraft to be delivered to the IAF in 2022, 67 months after the contract is signed, the source added.

As per terms of the IGA, deliveries will begin 36 months after the signing of the contract and be completed in 67 months.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/first-rafale-aircraft-made-for-india-takes-flight/article25447123.ece>

K9 Vajra, M777 howitzers to be inducted today, Sitharaman to attend event

K9 Vajra, M777 howitzers to be inducted today, Sitharaman to attend event PTI | Nov 9, 2018, 10.13 AM IST Printed from NEW DELHI: Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will attend a ceremony today to induct new artillery guns and equipment, including K9 Vajra and M777 howitzers, at Deolali artillery centre in Nashik, a ministry spokesperson said.

The defence minister, in a tweet, announced that the state-of-the-art gun system, with heli-lift capabilities even in mountainous region, will be inducted today in Army.

This medium Induction of 100 K9 Vajra at a cost of Rs 4,366 crore is to complete by November 2020. The first batch of 10 guns will be delivered this month, Defence Ministry spokesperson Colonel Aman Anand told reporters on Thursday.

Highlights

- Induction of 100 K9 Vajra at a cost of Rs 4,366 crore is to complete by November 2020
- The gun has a maximum range of 28-38 km and is capable of burst firing three rounds in 30 seconds
- The Army is also going to raise seven regiments of 145 M777 howitzers

The next 40 guns will be delivered in November 2019, and another 50 in November 2020, he said.

The first regiment of K9 Vajra, first-ever artillery gun manufactured by the Indian private sector, is expected to complete by July 2019.

The gun has a maximum range of 28-38 km. It is capable of burst firing three rounds in 30 seconds, intense firing of 15 rounds in three minutes and sustained firing of 60 rounds in 60 minutes, he said.

The Army is also going to raise seven regiments of 145 M777 howitzers.

Five guns each will be delivered to the Army beginning August 2019 and the entire process will complete in following 24 months. The first regiment will complete by October next year, the spokesperson said.

The gun, having a range of 30 km, can be moved to a desired location using helicopters and service aircraft.

Compact gun tractor to tow 130 MM and 155 MM artillery guns will also inducted during the ceremony, the officer said. It is fitted with a crane that can handle ammunition weighing two tons.

Maximum speed of the vehicle without a tow is 80 km per hour which comes down to 50 km per hour with a gun attached to it, he added.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/k9-vajra-m777-howitzers-to-be-inducted-today-sitharaman-to-attend-event/articleshow/66552262.cms>



Fri, 09 Nov 2018

For armed forces better operational preparedness Vice Chiefs' financial powers raised

In an effort to sustain the tempo of modernisation and operational preparedness, the Defence Ministry has enhanced the financial powers of the Vice Chiefs of three Services from `100 crore to `500 crore for procuring arms and ammunition. This will enable the armed forces to increase the reserves of arms and ammunition.

The decision comes in the backdrop of critical shortages of these items and the Comptroller and Auditor General(CAG) pointing out in one of its report tabled in Parliament that the Army does not have the adequate reserves for fighting an intense ten-day war. The shortage ranges from bullets, rifles, shells for artillery, rockets and other related ammunition for the three Services.

To speed up the process of filling these gaps in reserves, the Ministry on Thursday announced the decision to delegate greater financial decision-making powers to three Vice Chiefs in order to expedite the decision making process involved in the revenue procurements of the Armed Forces.

With the new delegation, the Vice Chiefs will be able to exercise financial powers up to five times more than the existing powers with an enhanced ceiling of `500 crore. This is likely to give another fillip to the capacity of the three Armed Forces. Officials said Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has taken this important decision to augment the arms and ammunition reserves of the Armed Forces to enhance their operational preparedness.

Procurement through revenue route is an ongoing process unlike capital procurements for which the Defence Acquisition Council(DAC) and the Cabinet Committee on Security(CCS) has to give an approval before the contracts are inked.

The enhanced powers to the Vice Chiefs will enable them to take decisions on their own as earlier they had to seek the Defence Ministry approval for procurements over `100 crores, sources said. Moreover, the armed forces can now buy various items ranging from rifles to ammunition for tanks, artillery, fighter jets and warships on a faster pace.

Meanwhile, Sitharaman on Friday will take part in the induction ceremony of M-777 ultra light howitzers and K-9 artillery guns at Artillery Centre, Deolali, Maharashtra. Four M-777 guns and ten K-9 long range artillery guns will be inducted on Friday. Incidentally, these two artillery guns are the first to be inducted after nearly three decades since the Bofors scandal stalled artillery modernisation.

India had inked a contract for 100 Vajra K-9 Tself propelled guns of 155mm caliber with a striking range of 28-38 km range in 2017 for `4,300 crores. The next lot of 40 guns will come in November next year and remaining lot of 50 guns in 2020, officials said. This gun will be deployed in the plains and can fire three rounds in 30 seconds, 15 rounds in three minutes in intense firing mode and 60 rounds in 60 minutes in the sustained firing mode. These guns are manufactured under Buy Global procedure of India in a joint venture and will have up to 50 per cent local content under a joint venture between Larsen and Tourbo and South Korea's Hanwha Techwin.

As regards the M-777, the Army is procuring these howitzers through the foreign military sale s(FMS) route from the US. The total contract is for 145 guns worth over `5,000 crores to be deployed in the mountains for the newly raised Strike Corps to fight China. The gun has a strike range of 30 kms and can be airlifted through helicopters and aircraft to remote and inaccessible forward posts located on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) facing China. The contract was inked in November 2016. The BAE systems manufactures these howitzers.

While the first lot of four will be inducted on Friday, from June next year starts the next batch arrives and then on in phases. The induction rate is expected to be five guns per month till complete consignment is received by mid 2021. Made of titanium, each gun weighs 4,000 kg making its transportable by helicopters and aircraft.

<https://www.dailypioneer.com/2018/india/vice-chiefs---financial-powers-raised.html>



Wed, 07 Nov 2018

China unveils stealth combat drone in development

By Dake Kang & Christopher Bodeen

Zhuhai, China (AP) — A Chinese state-owned company says it is developing a stealth combat drone in the latest sign of the country’s growing aerospace prowess.

The CH-7 unmanned aerial vehicle also underscores China’s growing competitiveness in the expanding global market for drones. China has won sales in the Middle East and elsewhere by offering drones at lower prices and without the political conditions attached by the U.S.

The CH-7’s chief designer Shi Wen says the aircraft can “fly long hours, scout and strike the target when necessary.”

“Very soon, I believe, in the next one to two years, (we) can see the CH-7 flying in the blue skies, gradually being a practical and usable product in the future,” Shi told The Associated Press.

Shi said manufacturer Chinese Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation plans to test fly the drone next year and begin mass production by 2022. He said the drone will likely be sold abroad but had no information on potential clients.

A model of the aircraft is being displayed at this week’s Zhuhai air show in southern China, a biannual event that showcases China’s latest advancements in military and civilian aviation.

With a wingspan of 22 meters (72 feet) and a length of 10 meters (33 feet), the swept-wing CH-7 is the size of a combat aircraft and its single engine can propel it at roughly the speed of a commercial jet airliner.

The U.S., Russia and France are also developing stealth drones, while Israel has long been a leader in the UAV field.

However, low prices and a willingness to transfer technology have endowed China with a “strong position,” in the UAV market, said Phil Finnegan, director of corporate analysis at the Teal Group Corp. in Fairfax, Virginia.

The U.S. has been extremely cautious about selling its higher-end unmanned system, even to NATO member states, opening up an opportunity to China in the export market, said Justin Bronk, an expert on such technologies at the Royal United Services Institute for Defense and Security Studies in London.

“It would represent an area of Chinese arms export offerings which no other country offers,” Bronk said.

Alongside its development of stealth fighters and commercial passenger jets, China has advanced rapidly in the development of UAVs, which have a relatively lower technological entry cost. Sales have also been boosted by the fact that China is not a signatory to the Missile Technology Control Regime that restricts exports of missiles and other unmanned weapons systems.

The numbers of drone programs unveiled in China in recent years has been “dizzying,” said Sam Roggeveen, director of the international security program at Australia’s Lowy Institute.

While the CH-7's ultimate effectiveness remains to be determined, if exported, it would "mark another step-change for China, which has traditionally not offered its cutting-edge technology to foreign customers," Roggeveen said.

Across the Middle East, countries locked out of purchasing U.S.-made drones due to rules over excessive civilian casualties are being wooed by Chinese arms dealers, now the world's main distributor of armed drones.

The sales are helping expand Chinese influence across a region crucial to American security interests and bolstering Beijing's ambitions to lead in high-tech arms sales.

While the U.S. still holds a technology advantage, China wins on price. The fact it is willing to sell the CH-7 abroad could indicate the technology is less than cutting edge, given China's desire to guard its technological edge in such areas, said Ron Huisken, a regional security expert at Australian National University.

China's exports also underscore the growing pervasiveness of drones in modern warfare, even without strong international agreements on where and how they can be used.

"One wonders what nasty surprises are in store as countries more casual about how they use drones and less strict about training standards get their hands on them," said Huisken.

Also appearing again at this year's Zhuhai show was China's homebuilt J-20 stealth fighter, which outwardly resembles the Lockheed Martin F-22 Raptor in service with the U.S. military.

It was joined by the Chinese J-10B fighter with vectoring thrust, featuring an engine equipped with a hinged nozzle. Vectoring thrust technology allows planes to direct their propulsion, giving it more flexibility in maneuvering, and the substitution of Chinese-made WS-10 engines for those imported from Russia appears to mark a new milestone for the domestic defense industry.

The jet fighters on display thrilled spectators. For many, the performances demonstrated China's burgeoning aerospace industry and growing confidence in its technology.

"I think it is pretty awesome," said Xie Dongni, a marketer for an information technology company.

"I might not a plane specialist, but I can feel the way China is changing. It is getting stronger slowly, its international status is growing higher and higher."

<https://apnews.com/6b2d2857f73c4fa387379c16b0dc60b9>