

MoD bans import of 18 defence platforms

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The Ministry of Defence (MoD) revealed in Parliament on Friday the names of 18 major defence platforms that can no longer be imported. Instead, they will henceforth be indigenously designed and developed (D&D) by the domestic industry.

“In continuous pursuit of achieving self-reliance in defence manufacturing under ‘Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan’ and in sync with the announcement made in the Union Budget 2022-23 that allocated 25 per cent of the defence R&D budget for industry-led R&D, 18 major platforms have been identified and announced by the MoD for industry led D&D,” stated the MoD in a written response to a Parliamentary question.

These include Army platforms, such as a light-weight tank, self-healing minefields and “plug-and-play housing” for soldiers posted at extreme altitudes. The navy platforms including a 127 millimetre naval gun for capital warships, while the air force platforms include the long-awaited



According to the ministry, these 18 platforms have been identified after consultations among the services, DRDO, and the defence industry

Indian Multi-Role Helicopter (IMRH) and a stand-off airborne jammer. Defence industry watchers pointed out that, starting August 2020, the MoD issued three lists of defence equipment, the import of which is embargoed. The August 2020 list incrementally bans the import of 101 items, with the embargo growing wider each year.

In June 2021, an additional list of 108 defence items was issued by the MoD, progressively banning their import.

Invoking “Atmanirbhar Bharat” repeatedly, the second list — termed “Positive Indigenisation List” — pushed up to 209, the number of defence items that must be compulsorily procured from Indian companies, the number rising each year out to 2025.

On New Year’s Day, 2021, 69 items from the first list were embargoed for import. On January 1, 2022, another 60 items came under the ban. Another 25 will be embargoed

for import at the end of 2022; 25 more at the end of 2023; 21 at the end of 2024 and nine on the New Year of 2026.

It is unclear how this latest import embargo list dovetails with the previous two lists.

The defence industry is sceptical about whether these lists create any pressure to indigenise. The Army is already procuring the K9 Vajra system that Larsen & Toubro (L&T) builds under a South Korean licence outside Pune, so banning the import of tracked guns is superfluous.

Meanwhile, the DRDO, along with private firms Kalyani Group and Tata Aerospace and Defence, is already developing towed artillery guns and Pinaka multi-barrelled rocket launchers. Similarly, the Army’s entire requirement of tanks has long been built at Chennai and its infantry combat vehicles at Medak. Banning the import of platforms that are already being built in India serves little purpose.

Similarly, there is little purpose in embargoing the import of Naval warships, when most of them are already being built in Indian shipyards. According

to official Navy figures, of 48 warships under construction, 46 are being built in India; only two frigates are being constructed in Russia.

Similarly, Hindustan Aeronautics (HAL) is already building the majority of the Air Force’s fighter and trainer aircraft in India, with the recent exception of the Rafale. Banning the import of aircraft such as the Tejas Mark 1A and the Light Combat Helicopter serve little purpose, since these are indigenously designed and manufactured aircraft, as is the HTT-40 basic trainer aircraft.

“These 18 platforms (announced on Friday) have been distributed between four indigenous routes prescribed in the Defence Acquisition Procedure-2020, namely, Make-I, Make-II, Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) and Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX),” said the MoD. “These 18 platforms have been identified after extensive consultations between the services, DRDO and the defence industry,” said the MoD.