

Lighter tanks, loitering munitions, storm drones, ISR systems to add to Army arsenal

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Light weight tanks, loitering munitions, storm drones, upgraded intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) systems, combat vehicles and lethal beyond line of sight fire-power are some of the major acquisitions Army is pushing to make armoured troops and mechanised infantry high altitude and futuristic battle complain.

Much of the Army's review of its inventory for capacity enhancement has emerged from strategic assessment, post Galwan stand-off with China in May 2020 and global conflicts, latest being the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, said sources in the defence establishment.

Niche technologies

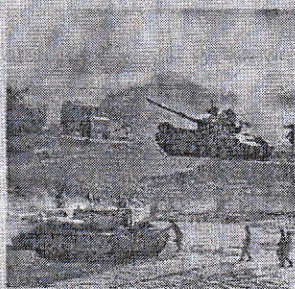
The Army is learnt to be keen on adding a futuristic light weight tank to its ageing fleet of T-72s, T-90s and Arjuns for speedier deployment and movement in difficult terrains especially at higher altitudes given the in-

creased threat perception from China along the LAC in northern borders.

Named as project Zorawar, the Army desires to enable the futuristic version of tanks with niche technologies, such as artificial intelligence and see through armour, for operations in a network-centric and electronic-warfare environment. It is needed to maintain continued 'operational readiness' and 'combat overmatch' against the adversary, said sources.

Equally the attempt is, as explained by defence sources, to secure the tanks from vulnerabilities against air threats as was seen during recent conflicts apart from giving operational edge. The army has finalised the general staff quality requirement for tanks, weighing about 25 tonnes, and is expected to reach out to Defence Ministry next month to roll out the process for acquisition—primarily through the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat route,' said sources.

The Army's procurement of



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the new generation tank platform, internally coined as Future Ready Combat Vehicle (FRCV), will take place in a phased manner with expected induction by 2030, believe sources.

In the new envisaged operational architecture, the Army intends to integrate storm drones in the infantry. Through 'Make 1' (which is 90 per cent government funding) emergency procurement, allowed by the defence ministry to expedite process of purchase through Make in India initiat-

ive, the Army expects to have storm drones by next year, much needed for beyond the line of sight fire power, said sources. The other UAV acquisitions needed to meet requirements will be done later through Make II industry route, said sources.

Swarm Drone System, elaborated defence sources, consists of a number of aerial vehicles which are AI enabled and capable of communicating with the control station as well as among themselves for offensive and defensive operations.

Similarly, other modifications for capacity building of the armoured corps and mechanised infantry also extends to loitering munitions, re-calibration callibration of anti-aircraft guns to have better and higher depth of penetration (DoP) of ammunition. The DRDO developed DoP ammunition have already undergone successful trials and would be manufactured through industry participation, said sources.