

Centre floats tender worth ₹1 lakh crore for 60 planes

The Defence Ministry issued the tender for multirole transport aircraft to multiple Indian firms, including HAL and private defence majors; it aims to replace Indian Air Force's ageing cargo fleet

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

The Defence Ministry on Wednesday issued a tender worth around ₹1 lakh crore for 60 multirole transport aircraft (MTA) for the Indian Air Force (IAF), in a major push to replace its ageing fleet of cargo and transport aircraft and expand its strategic airlift capability.

The tender has been issued to multiple Indian companies, including Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and private sector defence majors, a senior Defence Ministry official said.

The programme is envisaged as an Indian-led initiative, with Indian companies partnering with global original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) to manufacture the aircraft in the country, the official added.

Mahindra Defence has tied up with Brazilian aerospace major Embraer to offer the C-390 Millennium, while Tata is partnering U.S. firm Lockheed Martin to offer the C-130J Super Hercules, which is



Airlift assets: The IAF's C-130J Super Hercules aircraft flanked by two C-295 aircraft during a flypast. FILE PHOTO

Indian companies to partner with global original equipment manufacturers as part of programme

already operated by the IAF for special operations.

Under the proposed programme, around 20% of the aircraft are expected to be inducted in fly-away condition, while the remaining aircraft would be manufactured in India.

The domestically produced aircraft are expected to have more than 60% indigenous content and

tical airlift missions.

Separately, the force is inducting the C-295 transport aircraft under a programme involving Airbus and Tata, with around 70 aircraft planned for the IAF and the majority of them to be manufactured in India. The MTA programme is part of the IAF's broader modernisation drive amid concerns over its ageing transport fleet and the need to augment airlift capabilities.

The IAF has also issued a tender for 114 multirole fighter aircraft under its long-pending fighter modernisation programme. It is simultaneously looking to acquire more than 100 trainer aircraft to replace its ageing Hawk fleet and augment training capacity as the number of fighter squadrons is sought to be increased.

The proposed transport aircraft programme is also expected to deepen India's domestic aerospace manufacturing ecosystem by bringing global OEMs into production partnerships with Indian companies and increasing indigenous content in military airlift platforms.

would be built through joint ventures between Indian companies and the OEMs.

Aerial refuelling

The MTA are expected to provide the IAF with enhanced capability to rapidly move troops, equipment and other military assets over long distances. The aircraft could also potentially be configured for aerial refuelling, providing the IAF with an additional tanker capability.

The IAF currently operates 12 C-130J Super Hercules aircraft, primarily for special operations and tac-

Parliament passes Bill to rename Kerala as Keralam

Express News Service
New Delhi, August 12

THE RAJYA Sabha on Wednesday passed a Bill to change the name of Kerala to Keralam, just over two years after the state Assembly passed a unanimous resolution, asking the Centre for the name change.

The Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026, which changes the name of the state to Keralam and makes the necessary amendments to the Constitution, including in the First Schedule, was passed by a voice vote. The Lok Sabha had passed the Bill on Tuesday.

On Wednesday, MoS Home Nityanand Rai introduced the Bill on behalf of Home Minister Amit Shah, who was not present in the House. During the discussion on the Bill, all MPs supported the decision to rename the state, while some sought to change the names of some other states, cities and railway stations.

Congress MP Jebi Mather Hisham welcomed the Bill. When she sought to raise an

issue regarding the Home Minister, Leader of the House J P Nadda objected, asking the chair not to take on record the “political statement”.

TMC MP Derek O’Brien pointed out that West Bengal’s proposal to change the name of the state to Bangla had been pending for eight years. DMK MP Tiruchi Siva welcomed the Bill, recalling how the name of Madras was changed to Tamil Nadu. “We know the value of a name,” he said, while congratulating the people of the state.

AIADMK MP M Thambidurai called for the strengthening of cooperative federalism and respect for regional languages. Aam Aadmi Party MP Sanjay Singh, too, highlighted the need for respecting the various languages, attire and states in the country. Alleging that the Centre had not provided adequate funds to the state when it was hit by natural disasters, Singh said: “Don’t just change the name, change your behaviour.”

The House passed the Bill by voice vote.

31-member parliamentary panel to review FCRA Bill

Lok Sabha passes motion to refer the proposed legislation on foreign contributions to a JPC amid Opposition's demands for its withdrawal; panel must submit report in first week of Winter Session

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha on Wednesday adopted a motion referring the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC), amid a huge uproar by the Opposition, which demanded that the Bill be withdrawn completely as it was intended to target minority institutions.

The JPC will have 21 members from the Lok Sabha nominated by Speaker Om Birla and 10 from the Rajya Sabha nominated by Chairman C.P. Radhakrishnan.

The committee has to submit its report to the Lok Sabha by the last day of the first week of the Winter



Minister of State Nityanand Rai, who moved the resolution to refer the FCRA Bill to a JPC, speaking in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. ANI

Session of Parliament this year.

The motion to refer the Bill to the 31-member JPC was added to the List of Business of the Lok Sabha through a supplementary list just before the House was supposed to reconvene at 2 p.m., after being adjourned within minutes of assembling at 11 a.m. Though Union Home Mi-

nister Amit Shah was listed to move the motion, it was the Minister of State for Home, Nityanand Rai, who placed it before the House. Mr. Rai also presented a similar motion in the Rajya Sabha.

The Bill proposes to create a designated authority to manage and dispose of assets if an organisation loses its FCRA licence,

which the Opposition claimed could affect legitimate foreign funding for Christian NGOs and other minority-run social welfare institutions.

Before the motion was adopted, Congress MP K.C. Venugopal said the Bill was clearly targeting NGOs, especially those run by minority communities, and demanded that it be withdrawn. "On the one hand, the RSS is collecting donations from foreign countries, and on the other the government is targeting NGOs. The government should withdraw the Bill," Mr. Venugopal said.

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Border with India 'generally stable at the moment': China

The Hindu Bureau

The India-China border is "generally stable at the moment", China's Foreign Ministry said on Wednesday, in response to queries about recent reports of rising tensions in Arunachal Pradesh's eastern sector.

When asked about these reports on Tuesday, India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal had said that the maintenance of peace and tranquillity in border areas was of "utmost importance". He did not deny the reported rise in tensions since late July, in an area where both sides have been patrolling, with overlapping claims.

In a statement in response to the queries, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun described the current situation as "generally stable".

Diplomatic talks

"The China-India border situation is generally stable at the moment," Mr. Guo said. "China and India held the 36th meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on China-India Border Affairs last week. The two sides agreed to main-

Reports last week suggested Chinese PLA troops crossed the LAC at Pukar La and Ollo in Taksing

tain communication via diplomatic and military channels and jointly uphold peace and tranquillity in the border areas."

Reports last week suggested that Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops crossed the Line of Actual Control (LAC) at Pukar La and Ollo in Taksing circle of Upper Subansiri.

On August 7, Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu denied reports of an incursion, saying he would verify with the Army and local bodies. Officials have not publicly confirmed the reports.

"Due to the undemarcated nature of the boundary, patrols at times face off against each other. Such incidents are resolved through existing mechanisms and protocols. The Army and the [Indo Tibetan Border Police] ITBP are geared up to dominate the border and monitor and check Chinese activities," an official source said.

Germany is interested in buying green hydrogen from India, says Chargé D' Affaires

Saptaparno Ghosh

NEW DELHI

Germany is interested to purchase green hydrogen from India as well as expand their engagement for renewable energy, Georg Enzweiler, Chargé D' Affaires of the German Mission in India told *The Hindu*.

"India has the resources to produce green hydrogen which we could buy to cover our energy needs back home and not be dependent on procuring fossil fuels," he explained.

According to him, renewable energy partnership between the countries also offers quality business prospects.

Interacting on the side-



Georg Enzweiler

lines of the eleventh edition of 'Young Voices for Sustainable Development' summit, Mr. Enzweiler explained India has "fantastic resources" for producing renewable energy - both solar and wind, and a "dynamic forward-looking innovative business framework".

He added, Germany would therefore look to

bring its technological and industrial expertise as part of the engagement in the renewable energy space.

"India can [then look to] export the energy produced for which it could get good Euros. That could make it an attractive business model as well," he stated.

In response to a query about indigenising the German technology in the long run amid the Indian government's push for acquiring overall self-reliance, the German Chargé D' Affaires affirmed that it would be viable, especially with the European Union-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in sight.

"We expect a big push on energy and renewables

but also on the wider economy for both Europe and India [with the FTA]," he stated.

Separately, Mr. Enzweiler stated he was hopeful that the FTA would enter into force early 2027 - as is presently being widely predicted.

India and the EU successfully concluded negotiations about the "mother of all deals" FTA late January. It is to see tariffs on 99.5% of items exported by India dropping to nil once it comes into effect.

Elaborating on the sectors of interest for Germany, Mr. Enzweiler said, "For us, automobile industry is very important, [alongside] machinery and chemical industry."

Nighttime blitz damaged Russia's Black Sea Naval base: Zelenskyy

Anti-ship missiles, jet-powered aerial drones and sea drones conduct strikes on naval base in Novorossiysk, says Ukrainian leader; he warns of broader strategic moves by Russia; Moscow claims its air defences shot down more than 500 drones

Associated Press
KYIV

Ukrainian anti-ship missiles, jet-powered aerial drones and sea drones blitzed a major Russian Naval base on the Black Sea coast in a “unique” nighttime operation, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Wednesday.

Cutting-edge drones developed by Kyiv since Russia invaded more than four years ago have repeatedly targeted Russian ships in the Black Sea, including warships and oil tankers.



Extensive loss: A damaged private house following a Ukrainian drone strike in Novorossiysk in Russia on Wednesday. REUTERS

Both countries have Black Sea shorelines.

Ukraine's uncrewed fleet has succeeded in lim-

iting the movements of Russia's once-dominant Black Sea navy, Kyiv officials say, in one of the

country's biggest accomplishments of the war.

But Ukrainian officials reckon that Russian President Vladimir Putin is bent on prosecuting the invasion, despite his bigger army's slow and costly progress on the battlefield and U.S. diplomatic efforts to find a settlement.

Mr. Putin is planning “an additional rapid mobilisation of several hundred thousand Russians by the end of the year,” Mr. Zelenskyy said on social media late Tuesday, citing Ukrainian intelligence reports.

The Ukrainian military “carried out a unique oper-

ation targeting the Naval base in Novorossiysk – the last major stronghold of the Russian fleet in the Black Sea,” Mr. Zelenskyy said. The attack struck air defences, piers and other infrastructure in the Krasnodar region, he added.

Krasnodar region Gov. Veniamin Kondratyev said that hundreds of Ukrainian drones attacked Novorossiysk, Anapa and Gelendzhik and the Temryuk district of the region overnight.

Russian air defences downed more than 500 Ukrainian drones, the Defence Ministry in Moscow said.

RAINE CLAIMS LIMITING THE MOVEMENT OF RUSSIA'S 'ONCE DOMINANT' BLACK SEA NAVY

Putin threatens to seize EU ships if Europe targets Russian vessels

Reuters

Moscow, August 12

PRESIDENT VLADIMIR Putin said on Wednesday that Russia will respond in kind if European countries start to seize Russian merchant vessels and the commander of Russia's Pacific Fleet said his forces were ready to "inspect and detain" foreign vessels from what he called hostile states.

The comments, which Putin made as he oversaw navy drills in Russia's far east, come as the EU tries to ratchet up pressure on Russia's so-called shadow fleet, expanding sanctions against hundreds of vessels and detaining some ships and their crews for checks.

Some European governments have said they are exploring tougher maritime enforcement measures against ships suspected of sanctions evasion.

"We can see that the authorities of certain countries, in violation of international maritime law, are attempting to restrict the movement of our economic operators' vessels..., and have recently gone so far as to consider



Russian President Vladimir Putin inspects a military drill of the Pacific fleet, in Russia's far eastern Sakhalin region on Wednesday. REUTERS

the possibility of seizing our vessels and selling off the property they have plundered from us," Putin said.

"Naturally, this is nothing less than piracy and robbery. And if this begins to be put into practice, we shall be forced to respond in kind. And not neces-

arily in those waters where raids on our ships and vessels are planned, but wherever we ourselves deem it necessary and appropriate."

Viktor Liina, commander of Russia's Pacific Fleet, told Putin that what he described as hostile countries such as Britain and

France also transported goods on vessels flying flags of convenience which — if the EU and Britain's own language was used — could also be described as a "shadow fleet."

"Western states are actively using vessels flying the flags of third countries to transport

cargo in their own interests. In essence, this constitutes their shadow fleet," Liina told Putin.

"We have the capabilities to inspect and detain vessels belonging to unfriendly states and their shadow fleet; inter-agency coordination is in place, and we are ready to tackle these tasks."

He said his fleet had carried out a detailed analysis of maritime traffic in the Asia-Pacific region and knew the routes, the cargo, and ownership of vessels linked to unfriendly nations. The Russian Foreign Ministry weighed in too, accusing the EU in a statement of using its naval force in the Mediterranean — named operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI and originally launched to enforce a UN arms embargo on Libya — of carrying out unlawful inspections of foreign vessels.

It cited a search operation led by Italy which boarded a tanker from Russia's so-called "shadow fleet" this month, the second such operation in less than two weeks as Europe intensifies scrutiny of vessels suspected of helping Moscow circumvent oil sanctions.

UK PM appoints Indian-origin strategist as his 'Expert Adviser'

Aditi Khanna

London, August 12

BRITISH PM Andy Burnham has appointed an Indian-origin strategist and media executive to the role of Expert Adviser on Structure and Process.

Gautam Rangarajan, a former BBC strategist and musician, takes charge at 10 Downing Street this week in the newly created role. Gautam



Gautam Rangarajan has worked with the BBC

Rangarajan has been appointed as an Expert Adviser on Structure and Process.

"Gautam brings significant experience in corporate strategy and transformation," reads the

brief announcement from the UK PM's office. Burnham, who took charge as Labour Party leader and PM last month, has set out his vision to do things differently "starting with the launch of No. 10 North in Manchester as a symbol of his devolution agenda across all regions of the country. Rangarajan is expected to be instrumental in this planned transformation at the heart of the government. **PTI**