

## 13 yrs after request, Army to get 1.6 lakh rifles, carbines

*Govt Speeds up ₹3,547cr Buy for Frontline Troops*

*By Rajat.Pandit*

New Delhi: Thirteen years after the Army first asked for new-generation assault rifles and close-quarter battle (CQB) carbines, there is finally some hope for humble infantry soldiers. At least for the ones deployed on the borders with China and Pakistan.

The Nirmala Sitharaman-led defence acquisitions council (DAC) cleared the fast-track procurement

(FTP) of 72,400 assault rifles and 93,895 carbines for Rs 3,547 crore from the global market on Tuesday.

These limited emergency purchases, which come after repeated scrapping of projects due to graft allegations or unrealistic technical parameters as well as a woeful lack of indigenous options for well over a decade, are to be

INFANTRY: QUEEN OF THE BATTLE	WHAT ARMY NEEDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Infantry (4.8 lakh soldiers) is the Army's largest arm</li> <li>➤ 382 infantry battalions (each with 800 soldiers) &amp; 63 Rashtriya Rifles (counter-insurgency) units</li> <li>➤ Majority of Infantry's 23 regiments (with several battalions under them) are 'Single-Class' ones like Sikh, Gorkha, Dogra, Garhwal, Jat &amp; the like</li> <li>➤ 'Mixed' or 'Fixed' class units like Grenadiers or Mahar Regiment</li> <li>➤ 'All India-All Class' regiments, like Brigade of Guards, raised after Independence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 7,68,496 new-generation Assault Rifles (Another 50,035 rifles for Navy &amp; IAF)</li> <li>➤ 3,76,680 close-quarter battle (CQB) carbines (Another 41,655 carbines for Navy &amp; IAF)</li> <li>➤ 41,005 light machine guns (Another 2,727 LMGs for Navy and IAF)</li> <li>➤ 5,679 Sniper Rifles</li> <li>➤ Over 3.53 lakh new bullet-proof jackets (50,000 ordered in 2016-17)</li> <li>➤ Mini-UAVs, 3rd-generation anti-tank guided missiles, night-fighting devices etc</li> </ul>

Indian Army  
**3rd largest in world**  
(41,162 officers & 11.6 lakh soldiers)



subsequently followed by separate, larger 'Make in India' projects.

The DAC also simplified guidelines to encourage participation of the private sector in design and production of weapon systems to bolster the floundering domestic defence-industrial base.

No major 'Make in India' project has actually kicked off in the last three-four years, with at least six mega projects worth over Rs 3.5 lakh crore stuck without actual contracts being inked, as was earlier reported by TOI. "The MoD will now accept suo motu proposals from the industry, while allowing startups to develop military equipment. The minimum qualifications to participate in defence projects have also been relaxed by removing conditions related to credit rating and reducing the financial net worth required," an official said.

All vendors meeting the relaxed criteria will be allowed to participate in the prototype development process instead of the earlier restriction on only two shortlisted companies.

Army chief General Bipin Rawat also acknowledges his entire force cannot be equipped with top-notch weapons. "The hi-tech rifles, for instance, will be only for infantry battalions deployed on the front. The bulk will have to come through the indigenous route, ordnance factories or private industry," he said.