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AK rifles to be made in Amethi

New Delhi: A version of the famous AK series of Russian-origin rifles will now be made at Korwa in Amethi—Congress president Rahul Gandhi's constituency.

The production at the facility will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 28. Before that, India and Russia will ink a joint venture (JV) between the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) and the Russian Kalashnikov Concern.

The OFB plant at Korwa was planned in 2007 at an investment of Rs 408.01 crore by October 2010. A total of 7 lakh AK-203 rifles will be made at a cost of Rs 12,000 crore. The AK-203 is an upgraded version of the AK-100 series. It has several polymer parts that make it lighter.

The joint venture is in response to the Ministry of Defence (MoD)'s request for information (RFI) for procurement of rifles of 7.62×39 mm calibre under "Make in India" programme. The Russian share in the JV, as per the provisions of the Indian law, is going to be 49.5 per cent with the OFB share being the majority 50.5 per cent of the registered capital.

In a clear blowback of the Rafale controversy, the government, had last year, told the Russians that its proposed joint venture with the Adani Group would not be accepted and the tie-up had to be with the OFB.

This is the second time in past one year the India has ignored threat of US sanctions. Last October, it went ahead with the deal to procure the S-400 "Triumf" air-defence missile system from Russia.

India has a strategic partnership with the US, but has made it clear to Washington that India-Russia military relations stand separate from the India-US ties and that these are not inter-connected.

The US, in June, passed the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) that requires imposing curbs on nations that have "significant" defence relations with Russia.

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/ak-rifles-to-be-made-in-amethi/729102.html>

Chinooks here, infra not in place yet

CAG says required facilities unlikely before March 2021; will replace Soviet-origin Mi-26s

By Vijay Mohan

Chandigarh: Even as the US-made Chinook heavy-lift helicopters have started arriving in India, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has, while pinpointing several infirmities in procurement process, observed that the necessary infrastructure for operating the machines was unlikely to be in place before March 2021.

The CAG said the Air Force had aligned its technical specifications to suit Chinooks and had modified its requirements five times. It pointed out the sanction for infrastructure at the designated airbase in Chandigarh was accorded by the Defence Ministry in March 2018 whereas the contract for procurement of the helicopters was concluded in September 2015, leading to a delay in initiation of works procedure worth Rs 145.98 crore. The CAG tabled its report on IAF acquisitions in Parliament yesterday.

US aerospace major Boeing was contracted for procuring 15 Chinooks to support Army's combat operations, including transportation of troops, artillery guns and other equipment to forward locations. The

first four helicopters in semi-knocked down condition arrived by sea at a Gujarat port last week where these are being re-assembled by. After acceptance trials, the copters will be based in Chandigarh.

The IAF had four Soviet-origin Mi-26, world's heaviest copters, based at Chandigarh since 1986. One crashed a few years ago and of the remaining three, only one is operational.

Both Chinooks and Mi-26s were evaluated by the IAF to meet its new requirements. Pointing out that air staff qualitative requirements (ASQRs) were revised five times between 2006 and 2009, the CAG said, "ASQRs were being drafted in consultation with vendors and were being modified according to what was offered by them rather than the user need."

During field evaluation trials, it was noted that Chinook did not meet eight critical ASQRs and Mi-26 five. "Despite these non-compliances, both Mi-26s and Chinooks were cleared based on assurances by the vendors to rectify ASQRs before delivery," the CAG said. Though the Army had projected the requirement for heavy-lift helicopters, its representatives were not associated with field trials.

The CAG, meanwhile, has questioned the Defence Ministry's contention that Chinook not only has low operating cost, its compact size gives it an added advantage of landing in small helipads, thus giving it an edge over Mi-26s.

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/chinooks-here-infra-not-in-place-yet/729095.html>



Fri, 15 Feb 2019

In a first, Sqn Ldr Kamaljeet Kaur & Co-pilot Sqn Ldr Rakhi Bhandari undertakes parallel taxi track

In a First for the IAF, the "OTTERS" squadron of Western Air Command has undertaken Parallel Taxi Track (PTT) Operations with a full women crew in the Dornier 228 aircraft. The pilots, Sqn Ldr Kamaljeet Kaur and her co-pilot Sqn Ldr Rakhi Bhandari carried out successful parallel taxi track landing and take-off operations at Sirsa. This achievement highlights the theme of Aero India 2019 which is earmarked on 23 February as the day to highlight the Achievements of Women in Aviation Sector.

Parallel Taxi Track Operations are carried out to enable unhindered operations even when the runway is not available due to enemy action or any other reasons.

PTT Operations is a challenging task as the crew is required to land and take off from the taxi track, which is considerably smaller in width than the runway, with proximity to obstructions as compared to the main runway. There is no of error during the most critical phases of ight, landing and takeoff.

<https://nationaldefence.in/breaking-news/in-a-first-sqn-ldr-kamaljeet-kaur-co-pilot-sqn-ldr-rakhi-bhandari-undertakes-parallel-taxi-track/>



NASA's Opportunity rover mission on Mars 'bites the dust'

Designed to last just 90 Martian days and travel 1,000 metres, Opportunity vastly surpassed all expectations in its endurance, scientific value and longevity

The record-breaking 15-year-long Mars mission of NASA's Opportunity rover was declared over after the US space agency failed to contact the robotic explorer for over eight months. The Opportunity rover stopped communicating with Earth when a severe Mars-wide dust storm blanketed its location in June last year. After more than a thousand commands to restore contact, engineers in the Space Flight Operations Facility at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) made their last attempt to revive Opportunity Tuesday, to no avail.

The solar-powered rover's final communication was received June 10. Designed to last just 90 Martian days and travel 1,000 metres, Opportunity vastly surpassed all expectations in its endurance, scientific value and longevity. In addition to exceeding its life expectancy by 60 times, the rover travelled more than 45 kilometres by the time it reached its most appropriate final resting spot on Mars — Perseverance Valley.

"For more than a decade, Opportunity has been an icon in the field of planetary exploration, teaching us about Mars' ancient past as a wet, potentially habitable planet, and revealing uncharted Martian landscapes," said Thomas Zurbuchen, associate administrator for NASA's Science Mission Directorate.

"Whatever loss we feel now must be tempered with the knowledge that the legacy of Opportunity continues — both on the surface of Mars with the Curiosity rover and InSight lander — and in the clean rooms of JPL, where the upcoming Mars 2020 rover is taking shape," said Zurbuchen.

The final transmission, sent via the 70-metre Mars Station antenna at NASA's Goldstone Deep Space Complex in California, ended a multifaceted, eight-month recovery strategy in an attempt to compel the rover to communicate.

"We have made every reasonable engineering effort to try to recover Opportunity and have determined that the likelihood of receiving a signal is far too low to continue recovery efforts," said John Callas, manager of the Mars Exploration Rover (MER) project at JPL.

Opportunity landed in the Meridiani Planum region of Mars on January 24, 2004, seven months after its launch from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida. Its twin rover, Spirit, landed 20 days earlier in the 166-kilometre-wide Gusev Crater on the other side of Mars. Spirit logged almost eight kilometres before its mission wrapped up in May 2011. Mars exploration continues unabated.

NASA's InSight lander, which touched down on November 26, is just beginning its scientific investigations. The Curiosity rover has been exploring Gale Crater for more than six years. NASA's Mars 2020 rover and the European Space Agency's ExoMars rover both will launch in July 2020, becoming the first rover missions designed to seek signs of past microbial life on the Red Planet.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/lifestyle/science/nasas-opportunity-rover-mission-on-mars-bites-the-dust/1487505/>