

Cabinet okays ₹10,200cr deals for Pinaka rocket systems ammo

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New Delhi: In a major boost for the indigenous Pinaka multi-launch artillery rocket systems, the PM Narendra Modi-led cabinet committee on security on Wednesday cleared two major deals worth around Rs 10,200 crore for its lethal ammunition.

The two deals are for high-explosive pre-fragmented rocket ammunition at a cost of

about Rs 5,700 crore and area denial munitions for around Rs 4,500 crore, which will cater to the 10 Pinaka regiments already ordered by the over 11-lakh strong Army, as was reported by TOI earlier this month.

The high-explosive pre-fragmented rocket ammunition has an extended strike range of 45 km, while the aerial denial munitions can be launched to a distance of 37 km. The area denial munitions



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have the capability to saturate a target area with multiple bomblets, including anti-tank and anti-personnel minelets.

The two types of ammunition will be produced by the Nagpur-based private sector Solar Group and state-owned

Munitions India Ltd in a 60:40 ratio, with the contracts now set to be inked with them within the next few days, sources told TOI.

Army currently has four Pinaka regiments, with some of the launchers also deployed in high-altitude areas along the northern borders with China, while the other six are in the process of being inducted.

DRDO has developed a variety of ammunition for the Pi-

naka, including rockets with 45 km extended range and 75 km guided extended range. The plan now underway is to further enhance the range first to 120-km and then to 300 km.

"As soon as we get longer ranges, we might drop plans for other alternate long-range weapons we are looking at and concentrate on it (Pinaka)," the Army chief, General Upendra Dwivedi, had stated earlier this month.

US' WHO exit won't impact India projects: Govt

'Specialist Doctors Under Govt Schemes Doubled In 10 Years'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Health minister J P Nadda has said the US announcing its exit from the WHO will not impact the ongoing programmes being implemented in India in partnership with the UN agency.

"Our projects and programmes will continue. As far as

health is concerned, we are not dependent on anybody," Nadda said at a press conference Tuesday on the progress made in the last 10 years under the National Health Mission (NHM). "There are many programmes where WHO partners with us, and there will be no disruption. India is one of the major contributors to WHO."



Health is a priority area and finance for this sector has never been an issue, Nadda said

Highlighting achievements made under the NHM, Nadda said the number of specialist doctors available under govt programmes has dou-

TIMES VIEW: The number of specialist doctors in rural health centres doubling in the last 10 years is welcome news. The govt should also carry out a feedback study on their quality and availability to get a more nuanced and rounded understanding of the situation.

bled in the last 10 years. In a big boost to healthcare services in underserved areas, he said, human resources such as medical officers and nurses

have also increased significantly under the NHM. The share of central release under the NHM has seen a 185% growth since 2014, he said.

Health is a priority area and finance for this sector has never been an issue for the various programmes run by the Centre, Nadda said, ahead of the Union Budget Saturday. There is a shift from curative healthcare to preventive, curative, rehabilitative healthcare in order to provide comprehensive services, he said.

100 & COUNTING: Fishing village to interstellar space

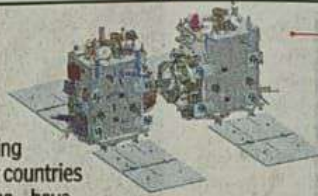
The successful launch of the NVS-02 navigation satellite aboard GSLV-F15 on Wednesday marked the 100th rocket launch by Isro. From launching the first American-supplied sounding rocket from Thumba, a tiny fishing village in Thiruvananthapuram, to launching spacecraft to Moon and Mars, Isro has come a long way. Here's a quick glance at the phenomenal journey.

FROM ISRO'S STABLES

Launch vehicles	Number of missions
SLV-3	4
ASLV	4
PSLV	62
GSLV	16
LVM3	7
SSLV	3
Reusable Launch Vehicle	1
Test Vehicle	1
Pad Abort Test	1
TOTAL	99

SPADEX

A twin-satellite mission performs a space docking experiment, something that only three other countries - US, Russia and China - have done earlier. It gives confidence to Isro's plans for India's plans to establish its own space station (Bharatiya Antariksh Station) by 2035 and launch crewed lunar landing by 2040



- > With Chandrayaan 3, India becomes the 4th country to send a probe to Moon
- > In Aug, 2023 **Vikram** lander soft-landed on the moon's south pole and Pragyan rover was deployed
- > Pragyan rover discovered an ancient 160km-wide buried crater
- > Lander and rover, designed for one lunar day (14 earth days)

- > First successful GSLV launch with indigenous cryogenic engine (CE7.5). The cryogenic upper stage of the three-stage vehicle uses 12.8 tonnes liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen
- > First successful GSLV MkIII launch. The 43.5m, 640-tonne rocket carries 4,000kg to GTO and 800kg to 600km low earth orbit



- > **Chandrayaan 2**, India's second Moon mission tries to land a spacecraft on Moon, but it crashlands
- > The orbiter continues to circle the moon at a 100km lunar polar orbit
- > The orbiter studies the surface composition

First successful launch of GSLV (Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle). The rocket carries 1800kg GSAT-2 to 180km-36,000km elliptical orbit. The 49m tall three-stage vehicle weighed 414 tonnes. The first Indian rocket to use a cryogenic engine (made by Russia), GSLV can carry 2,500kg to a geosynchronous transfer orbit of 35,000km

Mission control



Chandrayaan-1, India's first Moon mission carries an orbiter to go around Earth's natural satellite

First successful launch of **PSLV** uses liquid propulsion rocket engine. The 44m tall, 2.8m diameter rocket weighing 320 tonnes with four stages carries IRS-P2, an 804kg remote sensing satellite. PSLV can carry 1,750kg to a 600km sun synchronous polar orbit (600-1000km)

First successful launch of **ASLV**, a 24m, five-stage, all-solid rocket that could carry 150kg-class satellites into a 400km circular orbits. Places 106.1kg SROSS-C satellite into a 255 x 430 km orbit

India makes **Aryabhata**, a 360kg satellite launched by a Soviet Kosmos-3M rocket from

Kapustin Yar, achieving a 563km perigee and 619km apogee. Lost signals after five days and mainframe remained active till March 1981

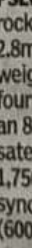
Incospar, the predecessor of Isro, launches Nike-Apache, a US sounding rocket from Thumba. Develops capability to carry 100kg payload to 160km altitude

First successful launch of Rohini-1B satellite from Sriharikota

SLV-3 rocket with solid propellants places a 35kg satellite into a 302x919km orbit

India becomes the 6th nation to launch satellites

Vikram Sarabhai started the Indian space programme in the early 1960s



Trump admin set to push India to ink more defence deals

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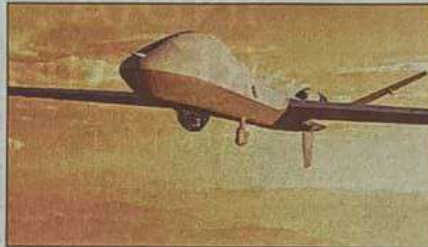
New Delhi: From fighter jets and armoured combat vehicles to aero-engines and missiles, Trump administration is set to push India to further crank up military purchase from US, which already stands at well over \$25 billion just since 2007.

President Donald Trump's transactional approach was clearly evident in his phone conversation with PM Narendra Modi on Monday, where he called upon India to increase its procurement of US-origin weapon systems and platforms.

"India will have to negotiate carefully with the new Trump administration. US

engines with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) in India for Tejas Mark-II fighters. The deal, which involves 80% transfer of technology of engine parts of the total value, will cost around \$1.5 billion.

US has also been hard-selling joint manufacture of the latest generation of Stryker armoured infantry combat vehicles (ICVs) as part of the bilateral defence-industrial cooperation roadmap, which was finalised in June 2023.



India will have to negotiate carefully with the new Trump administration, an official said

► Related report, P 12

military technology is certainly top-notch, but it will have to dovetail into our policy of 'Make in India' with foreign collaboration at a reasonable cost. India wants co-development and co-production instead of just outright purchases," an official said.

Trump's push comes barely four months after India inked a mega \$3.3 billion contract with US govt for 31 weaponized MQ-9B 'Predator' remotely piloted aircraft, along with another \$520 million contract with drone-manufacturer General Atomics to set up an MRO facility here.

But that was during the last days of the Biden administration. Trump will want his own pound of flesh in terms of big deals, apart of course from strategic convergence on several fronts.

There are, of course, the ongoing techno-commercial negotiations, which began last month, for co-production of the American General Electric F414-INS6 aero-

With the Army projecting a requirement for 527 wheeled ICVs as part of its much bigger plan for mechanized infantry units, US quietly demonstrated the mobility and firepower of the eight-wheeled Stryker, with the Javelin anti-tank guided missiles, in high-altitude Ladakh in Sept, amid some criticism of indigenous options being ignored in the process.

US is also eyeing IAF's long-standing quest for 114 new multi-role fighter aircraft to be manufactured in India, at an initial estimate of Rs 1.25 lakh crore, with foreign collaboration. With the defence ministry now working to break the logjam over the project, US will be showcasing its F-16 and fifth-generation F-35 fighters at Aero-India in Bengaluru from Feb 10 to 14. US would like India to also buy another six P-8I long-range maritime patrol aircraft to add to the 12 similar planes packed with weapons and sensors it has acquired for \$3.2 billion earlier.

Waqf, ONOE bills among 62 likely in Budget sitting

Others Cover Immigration, Banking, And Official Secrets

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The govt is also eyeing amendments to the Corporate Laws Bill and Partnership Bill

New Delhi: Govt is likely to table 62 bills for introduction and passage in the coming Budget session of Parliament. The proposed legislations include Immigration and Foreigners Bill, Official Secrets Bill, PMLA Amendment Bill, Parliament (Prevention and Disqualification) Bill, Banking and Insurance Amendment Bills, Registration of Marriage of NRIs Bill, and Higher Education Commission Bill.

As expected, Waqf Amendment and One Nation One Election bills are also set to be tabled during the session. The parliamentary affairs ministry has communicated about the proposed bills to be tabled as a part of govt's legislative business to all ministries concerned so that they can take their proposed bills to cabinet for approval.

Sources said, the Immigration and Foreigners Bill is in the priority list of legislative business. The contours of the proposed bill are not available in public domain and would be known once cabinet approves it. At present, India has several laws that govern the entry, stay, and exit of foreigners, including the Foreigners Act, 1946, the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920, and the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939.

Similarly, govt has put the Registration Amendment Bill of 2013 of the rural development ministry and three bills pertaining to the shipping ministry on the priority list. The rural development ministry had proposed to make registration mandatory for all immovable property, regardless of the lease term, in the Registration Amendment Bill.

Though the details of the proposed amendment to the 94-year-old Official Secrets Act (OSA) is not yet made public, the home ministry, in 2017, had reviewed the provisions of the colonial-era law to make it compatible with the present democratic set-up. The law may be amended with a modern outlook but without compromising on national security.

TOI has learnt that govt is also eyeing amendments to the Corporate Laws Bill and Partnership Bill. There are also proposals to introduce the Delhi Rent Amendment Bill of 1997 and Delhi Rent Repeal Bill of 2013. Similarly, the proposed amendment to the Motor Vehicle Act, National Highway Act and Digital Vishwavidyalaya Bill are also in the list of 62 bills.

Rabi crop acreage records jump in 2024-25 but farmers continue to pick wheat over oilseeds

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New Delhi: The overall acreage of Rabi (winter sown) crops increased in 2024-25 compared to the previous crop year, with sowing of wheat getting more attention of farmers compared to oilseeds.

The acreage of wheat increased by nearly 2.8% whereas it dipped by 4% for oilseeds in the current year compared to 2023-24, despite the govt's attempt to increase the sown area of oilseeds through various support in order to reduce the country's import bills.

Overall, the acreage of all crops put together this year is



The acreage of wheat increased by nearly 2.8%

around 656 lakh hectare compared to 644 lakh hectare in the previous year—an increase of 12 lakh hectare (nearly 2%)—with the sown area of wheat, the main Rabi crop, occupying nearly half of it at 324 lakh hectare compared to 315 lakh hec-

tare in 2023-24.

The data released by the agriculture ministry at the end of the Rabi sowing season this week shows that the sown area of pulses rose by 3 lakh hectare—from 139 lakh hectare in 2023-24 to 142 lakh hectare in 2024-25.

The acreage of oilseeds, on the other hand, reported a decline of four lakh hectare (from 102 lakh hectare in 2023-24 to 98 lakh hectare in 2024-25) with rapeseed and mustard showing the biggest fall.

“Poor returns to farmers on oilseeds compared to competing crops such as wheat and pulses is the main reason behind it in the Rabi season.

Price signal for wheat is positive currently, while it is either stable or negative for oilseeds,” former member of the Uttar Pradesh Planning Commission, Sudhir Panwar, said.

Panwar, a farm expert, told **TOI** that farmers were forced to sell mustard, sunflower and soybean below minimum support price (MSP) in absence of market intervention by the govt. “Since storage life of oilseeds is short compared to wheat, farmers had to resort to distress sale,” he said, citing the factors behind the farmers' choice in favour of wheat.

Data shows that even the acreage of millets remained flat around 56 lakh hectare this year, despite constant appeal to farmers towards crop diversification.

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