

Army to buy air defence system

In 2017, the Centre decided to go for two more regiments of the Akash missile system (in picture). R.V. Moorthy

After several retrials and delays, the Army is set to begin contract negotiations in the multi-billion dollar deal for the very short-range air defence system or VSHORAD.

“The activities relating to the Contract Negotiation Committee for the deal started in mid-February. The bids will be opened shortly to select the lowest bidder so as to begin cost negotiations,” a defence official said.

Before the bids are opened, a benchmark price will be set based on various factors, and the bids will be checked with it.

The request for proposal was first issued in October 2010 for over 5,000 missiles, 258 single launchers and 258 multi-launchers, estimated to cost Rs. 6,400 crore. Since then, there have been trials and retrials because of the deviations in the products. In the earlier cases, the Army tried to avoid the situation of only one vendor left in the field, with others eliminated for non-compliance, because this would result in the cancellation of the tender under the Defence Procurement Procedure. So, re-trials were held again after the vendors were given time to fix the anomalies. “Three companies are in the contest, and all have been declared compliant after the re-trials held last year,” the official said. The request for information was issued in 2010. The trials started in 2012. Of the five who responded, MBDA of France; Rosoboronexport of Russia; and SAAB of Sweden made it.

System configuration

The system should have a maximum range of 6 km and an altitude of 3 km, besides all-weather capability. It will replace the IGLA. Early last year, the Defence Ministry cancelled a second air defence tender for a short-range surface-to-air missile and decided to go for two more regiments of the indigenous Akash systems.

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