

INDIA, RUSSIA SET TO INK AK-203 RIFLE DEAL WORTH RS. 5,000 CRORE

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Replenishing arsenal: AK-203 rifles will replace the INSAS rifles inducted over three decades ago. Special Arrangement

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) has given its final approval for a deal with Russia to manufacture over six lakh AK-203 assault rifles in India, Government sources confirmed on Saturday.

The deal, estimated to be worth over Rs. 5,000 crore, is scheduled to be signed on December 6 during the visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to India.

“In an endeavour to provide a big boost to self-reliance in defence manufacturing in India, the Government has approved the plan for production of over five lakh AK-203 assault rifles at Korwa, Amethi in U.P.,” a government source said.

The 7.62 x 39 mm calibre AK-203 rifles will replace the INSAS rifles inducted over three decades ago. Having an effective range of 300 m, they are lightweight, robust and easy-to-use.

Increased effectiveness

“They will enhance the operational effectiveness of the Indian Army in counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations,” the source said.

Mr. Putin is scheduled to visit India on December 6 and 7 for an annual summit, during which the two countries will also hold the inaugural 2+2 ministerial dialogue.

The project will be implemented by Indo-Russian Rifles Private Ltd (IRRPL) jointly with the erstwhile OFB (now Advanced Weapons and Equipment India Limited) and Munitions India Limited of India and Rosoboronexport (RoE) and Kalashnikov Concern of Russia.

Modified proposal

In February 2019, India and Russia signed an Inter-Governmental Agreement for AK-203 rifles, following which the IRRPL was set up.

The Ministry of Defence already floated a Request For Proposal (RFP) to the joint venture for the supply of 6.71 lakh rifles but the final deal had been held up over the high cost of each rifle.

The RFP has now been modified to 6.1 lakh after a recent deal for 70,000 rifles through the emergency route.

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