

## Army finalises plan to modernise weapons

The sources said a fresh RFI (request for information) to procure the LMGs will be issued in the next few days, months after the Defence Ministry scrapped the tender for the 7.62 calibre guns as there was only one vendor left after a series of field trials. The plan is to initially procure around 10,000 LMGs.

The Army has also finalised the specifications for a new 7.62 mm assault rifle. The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), the Ministry's highest decision-making body on procurement, is expected to give the go-ahead for it.

"The General Service Quality Requirements (GSQR) for the new assault rifle has been finalised. The procurement plan will soon be placed before the DAC for approval," said a senior official, who is part of the acquisition process.

In June, the Army had rejected an assault rifle built by the state-run Rifle Factory, Ishapore, after the guns miserably failed the firing tests. The procurement of assault rifles has witnessed significant delays due to a variety of reasons, including the Army's failure to finalise the specifications for it. The Army needs around 7 lakh 7.62x51 mm assault guns to replace its INSAS rifles.

### Single-vendor issue

Around 20 firms responded to an RFI for the rifles in September last year. In June, the Army had kick-started the process to procure around 44,600 carbines, nearly eight months after a tender for it was retracted, also due to a single-vendor situation. Around half a dozen firms, including a few global arms manufacturers, have responded to the RFI.

Army sources said various specifications for the LMGs and battle carbines were tweaked to ensure that the problem of single vendor does not recur. The combined cost of the LMGs, assault rifles and carbines will be in excess of Rs. 40,000 crore, said an official.

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