

ARMY DEPLOYS MEDIUM, LONG-RANGE WEAPONS ACROSS NORTHERN BORDER

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The K9 Vajra Tank on the Rajpath.R.V. MoorthyR.V. Moorthy

Since the standoff with China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh in May 2020, the Army has deployed its entire range of medium-range artillery guns and long-range rockets in the region to augment its long range fire power as part of the reorientation towards the northern borders. The Army is now in the process of procuring another 100 K9-Vajra howitzers, which has already been approved by the Defence Ministry.

The Regiment of Artillery is also in the process of inducting loitering munitions, while it is also looking at procuring tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV). "Induction of Dhanush, K-9 Vajra and M777 Ultra Light Howitzers (ULH) has enhanced reach of artillery firepower.

Operationalisation of Pinaka Multi-Rocket Launch System (MRLS) has added punch to long range capability of artillery firepower," a defence source said. The Regiment is celebrating the 196th Gunners Day on September 28.

The source added that in the next five years, majority of these inductions should near completion, barring any slippages in delivery schedules. On this note, the source stressed on the need to upscale the capacities and capabilities of the domestic industry and the need to evolve a "conglomerate or consortium culture".

The Army plans to convert all its artillery regiments to medium range by converting it to 155 mm standard. The process of completing the mediumisation process is likely to be achieved sometime around 2040, the source stated. Further, the Regiment of Artillery is looking at procuring tactical UAVs, unlike the Medium Altitude Long Endurance UAVs operated by the Army Aviation, to enable Observation Post (OP) officers to better direct fire power and also to carry out post strike damage assessment at long ranges.

Ground based surveillance has limitations and so we are looking at mini-UAVs of two types which are capable of vertical take-off and landing, sources explained. These include UAVs capable with range of 15-20 km and and endurance of upto two hours and those with slightly longer range of of 80km with endurance of four hours.

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