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Indian Army Inducts Major Artillery Gun Systems

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The Indian Army has received the first batch of its new artillery weapons at Devlali Field Firing Ranges in Maharashtra.

- The artillery gun systems include the **M777 American Ultra Light Howitzers, K9 Vajra, and a 'Composite Gun Tractor'** for towing some existing guns in service.
- More than three decades have passed since a modern artillery system was inducted by the army, the last being the Bofors FH77B02 in 1987.

K9 Vajra

- The K9 VAJRA-T 155mm/ 52 is a tracked self-propelled howitzer, which has its roots in the K9 Thunder, the mainstay of the South Korean Army.
- The Vajra offers a high rate of fire at a long range and is compatible with Indian and standard NATO ammunition.
- The K9 Thunder platform is made of all-welded steel armour protection material.
- The K9 gun has been developed under the **'Buy Global' programme of the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP)** where foreign companies are allowed to participate—in this case Hanwha Techwin of South Korea is the technology partner of L&T.
- The first 10 K9 Vajra guns have been imported from **South Korea** and have been assembled by **L&T** in India. The balance 90 guns will be largely manufactured in the country.

M777

- The 155mm, 39 Calibre Ultra light Howitzers have been procured from USA under Government to Government Foreign Military Sales in 2016 and will be assembled by U.S.A.'s BAE Systems in partnership with Mahindra Defence.
- It is one of the lightest guns that was actively used in Iraq and Afghanistan, the M777 will be deployed on the high altitude borders with China and Pakistan and is especially useful with the Chinook helicopters that can transport them quickly.

- It is smaller and lighter, as it is made of titanium and aluminium alloys and weighs just 4 tonnes. It has effective firing range of 24 km.
- It has been procured through the **Foreign Military Sales (FMS) route under the 'Buy Global' programme of the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP)**.

Significance

- The artillery has always been a battle winning factor. It possesses the ability to strike deep with great accuracy and cause maximum damage to even well-constructed shelters and bunkers.
- Other than the Bofors inducted in 1984, Indian Army possessed the 130 mm guns and 105 mm guns inducted in the 1960's and 70's. The 130 mm lacked the ability to fire in mountains and the 105 mm lacked range. Both guns fired limited type of shells with lesser level of fragmentation.
- Both M777 and K9 Vajra would enhance firepower in a region where spread of deployment restricts fire support to troops holding ground in the defensive role.
- The procurement of state of the art defence equipments not only enhances the capability of armed forces, but also provides technological know-how to the domestic manufacturers. This in turn will push the indigenous manufacturing of defence equipments.

Defence Procurement Procedure

- The Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP-2016) had replaced the DPP-2013 based on the recommendations of the **Dhirendra Singh Committee** that was appointed in May 2015 to review the DPP, 2013.
- DPP, 2016 focuses to boost the **Make-in-India** initiative of the Government of India, by promoting indigenous design, development and manufacturing of defence equipment, platforms and systems.
- The government has introduced a **newly incorporated procurement** class called **"Buy Indian (IDDM)"**, where IDDM stands for **Indigenous Designed Developed and Manufactured**. This would have the first preference in all acquisitions once the DPP comes into effect.
- Besides this, **preference** has been accorded to **'Buy (Indian)' and 'Buy and Make (Indian)'** categories of capital acquisition over 'Buy (Global)' & 'Buy & Make (Global)' categories.