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National

Indian Navy seeks MANTA autonomous ship-launched ISR/targeting drone (DISC 14)

Navy issued requirement under DISC 14 for a ship-launched autonomous tactical attack/ISR drone.

- Platform sized <7m length, <2.8m width, <2.7t; endurance >=7 days, range >750 nm.
- Emphasis on autonomy: navigation, collision avoidance, target ID, mission execution via AI.
- Payload includes EO/IR, laser rangefinder, SATCOM, mesh-capable V/UHF SDRs.
- Carries two multicopter drones for local aerial ISR extension.
- Stealth/low-observable features required for contested littoral operations.
- Signals demand for distributed, persistent maritime sensing/targeting close to adversary coasts.

MoD issues EoI for indigenous 1,000-kg aerial bomb (Mk-84 class); plan to procure 600

The Ministry of Defence has formally invited industry participation to develop 1,000-kg aerial bombs, akin to the Mk-84 class. The system will be compatible with both Russian and Western-origin aircraft in IAF service, replacing imported munitions. This initiative falls under the Make-II (industry-funded) and Buy (Indian–IDDM) categories, reflecting a push for indigenously designed, developed, and manufactured defence equipment. The project is structured in two stages: initial design and development of six prototypes-both live and inert—followed by a procurement phase. Trials will be conducted within India on specified IAF aircraft platforms, with a minimum of 50% indigenous content required. The estimated timeline from EoI issuance to contract signing is about 2.5 years, including user trials, evaluation, and commercial processes.

Why the IAF needs local production now

Currently, Mk-84 class general-purpose bombs are imported from foreign suppliers, limiting strategic autonomy.

The proposed indigenous bomb is described as a natural fragmentation, high-calibre munition with high blast effect and significant peak over-pressure against enemy targets. By developing it locally, India aims to secure supply chains, reduce dependency, and tailor designs for operational needs.

IAF Invites Bids For Hydrogen-Powered Heavy-Lift Airship Project For Surveillance Missions

The Indian Air Force has announced an initiative to develop hydrogen-powered autonomous airships, signalling a major technological leap in its surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities. The project, formally titled the Medium Altitude Heavy Lift Airship, is envisioned as a pilotless platform capable of operating at altitudes of around 30,000 feet while carrying payloads of up to 5,000 kilograms. The IAF has invited bids from Indian companies, stipulating that proposals must maintain at least 50 per cent indigenous content, though foreign collaboration is permitted.

The airship is expected to serve multiple strategic roles, including persistent intelligence gathering, electronic warfare support, and communications functions akin to airborne radar systems.

It will also be designed to carry specialised payloads and act as a launch base for missiles and drones while in flight.

The IAF has emphasised hydrogen as the preferred fuel source, citing its abundance, non-toxic nature, high energy density, and clean combustion by-product of water vapour. Hybrid propulsion systems combining hydrogen fuel with solar power, batteries, or fuel cells are encouraged, with a minimum endurance requirement of ten days. The airship must be capable of auto-launch and recovery from both prepared and unprepared surfaces, ensuring adaptability in diverse environments.

Communication systems are expected to provide line-of-sight coverage of at least 250 kilometres or operate seamlessly through satellite links.

The IAF has not disclosed the number of airships it intends to procure, but the requirements underscore the scale and ambition of the project.

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Industry partners will need to demonstrate strong financial and technical foundations, including manufacturing infrastructure, in-house design capability, and robust project management expertise. Proposals must be submitted by 30 April, with the IAF set to select the most suitable partner from among the competing bids.

GTRE To Transform Su-30MKIs Into Flying Testbeds For India's Indigenous Jet Engines

India is embarking on a new chapter in its aerospace journey with the decision to convert two Su-30MKI fighter jets into dedicated flying testbeds for indigenous engine development. GTRE is spearheading this initiative, which is expected to accelerate the certification of homegrown aero engines, including the ambitious Kaveri 2.0 and other advanced high-thrust systems for future fighter aircraft. The two selected Su-30MKIs will be extensively modified with advanced instrumentation to record detailed performance data during flight. Unlike ground-based laboratories, airborne testing will allow engineers to observe how Indian-made engines and components behave under real flight conditions. Flight trials will be conducted in a carefully structured, step-by-step manner. Initial tests will focus on individual components rather than complete engines, ensuring that each subsystem is safe and reliable before integration. The GTRE will employ detailed Failure Modes, Effects and Criticality Analysis to identify potential failure points during flight.

Astra-Rafael JV secures ₹250 crore HAL contract for advanced Software Defined Radios to digitize aviation

Astra Rafael Comsys Private Limited (ARC), a collaborative venture between Hyderabad's Astra Microwave Products Limited and Israel's Rafael Advanced Defence Systems, has clinched a significant contract worth ₹250.58 Crores from HAL.This substantial agreement focuses on the provision of advanced Software Defined Radios (SDR), a cornerstone of modern military communication. The contract is inclusive of all taxes and is slated for completion within an 18-month window commencing from 1st April 2026.The technology at the heart of this deal, Software Defined Radios, represents a paradigm shift from traditional hardware-based communication. SDRs allow for versatile, programmable communication protocols, making them indispensable for the high-stakes environment of modern defence aviation.

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Sun Inox Metal Forge fast-tracks commissioning of 155mm artillery shell facility to address global demand

Sun Inox Metal Forge has rapidly commissioned a new facility in Phaltan, Maharashtra, to manufacture 155mm M107 artillery shells, strengthening India's defence production capacity and addressing surging global demand for ammunition. The facility ensures a resilient supply chain, reducing turnaround time at filling plants and positioning the Indian private sector as a competitive global vendor for NATO-standard artillery hardware.

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Army bats for Rs 250 crore fund to end startup 'trial trap', proposal with MoD

With defence startups often unable to move beyond the trial stage, the Indian Army has proposed a Rs 250 crore annual Field Exploitation and Capability Acceleration (FECA) fund per Service Headquarters, which is under consideration with the defence ministry. It aims to create a structured system to test and evaluate new technologies in real conditions, backed by small initial orders to assess performance. "The idea is to plug gaps by allowing improvements to systems over time, adapting civilian technologies for military use and covering costs during trials and

field use, including damage and other expenses that startups currently have to bear on their own. The challenge faced by start-ups is most evident in No Cost No Commitment (NCNC) demonstrations, where startups pitch their systems with operational potential. The Army has procured equipment worth around Rs 5,000 crore through this route, with several of these systems proving useful in field exploitation and emergency procurement cases.

"There have been many cases where graduates from top institutions invest all their savings to build systems, only to see them fail in high-altitude conditions where performance varies. Equipment gets damaged, sometimes destroyed, effectively ending a startup's journey despite its potential. The proposed framework seeks to break this logjam. Startups and MSMEs will be given a three to four month window to demonstrate their systems against defined operational requirements. "If a system performs well, it can be taken up for limited field exploitation orders, with the possibility of scaling up to bulk procurement once it proves itself in service,"

A key element of the proposal is risk support, which addresses a major gap in the current system. At present, startups bear the full cost of equipment damaged or expended during trials, including transportation to forward and high-altitude areas, repairs and modifications.

Despite existing initiatives such as iDEX and the Make procedure under DAP 2020, converting prototypes into actual procurement remains a persistent issue, with FECA envisaged as a more structured mechanism to bridge this gap.

India Unveils Advanced Cavitation Tunnel For Stealthy Indian Subs

India has taken a major step toward naval self-reliance with the foundation stone laid for a Large Cavitation Tunnel (LCT) at the Naval Science and Technological Laboratory (NSTL) in Visakhapatnam. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh described the facility as a strategic national asset that will allow India to indigenously design, test, and validate submarines, warships, and underwater systems without relying on foreign facilities.

The LCT will play a crucial role in advancing propulsion technologies, reducing noise signatures, and enhancing stealth capabilities—key factors for modern submarine and ship design. The inauguration also showcased India's growing expertise in autonomous underwater vehicles, torpedoes, and next-generation maritime systems.

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Wipro wins $1-billion Olam deal, to acquire IT arm Mindsprint

Wipro has signed an eight-year deal, one of its largest strategic transformation agreements, with Olam Group that is expected to exceed $1 billion in total contract value, as the IT major moves to acquire Singapore-headquartered firm's digital services arm Mindsprint.

The deal comes with a committed spend of $800 million and will see Wipro deliver end-to-end transformation services to Olam through a consulting-led and AI-powered approach, as it deepens its push into large, long-duration deals amid a muted demand environment. Wipro will acquire Mindsprint, which will become a wholly owned subsidiary subject to regulatory approvals, with closure expected by the end of June.

The unit, which employs more than 3,200 professionals, is important to Olam's digital transformation efforts and brings domain-led capabilities in supply chain, digital platforms and proprietary solutions.

The engagement will span Olam's "farm-to-fork" value chain, covering areas such as farming, forecasting, trading, supply-chain operations and customer engagement.

Wipro said it will deploy its AI suite, Wipro Intelligence™, alongside industry-specific solutions to improve operational effectiveness and resilience across the business.

Global

Iranian media footage questions US rescue mission narrative; claims multiple US aircraft losses

Iranian state-linked outlets have circulated footage claiming that several U.S. aircraft—including MC-130/C-130 transports and Black Hawk helicopters—were destroyed during a reported combat search and rescue (CSAR) attempt near Isfahan. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) asserted that joint aerospace and ground forces intercepted the mission, while U.S. sources emphasized that the rescue was successful and downplayed reports of losses. The information environment remains highly contested, with verification varying across sources and no independent confirmation of the alleged aircraft destruction.

Strategically, the incident highlights the elevated risks of CSAR operations in denied airspace, where adversary air defenses and rapid response forces can threaten survivability. It also underscores the potential for escalation, as disputed narratives around aircraft losses and mission outcomes can fuel political and military tensions. Analysts expect follow-on scrutiny of U.S. tactics, force-protection measures, and the resilience of aircraft platforms in contested environments, as well as broader implications for operational security in ongoing conflict zones.

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U.S. Special Forces Launch One of the Most High-Risk Combat Rescues for Downed F-15E Crew in Iran

U.S. special operations forces launched a high-risk combat search and rescue mission deep inside southwestern Iran to recover the crew of a downed U.S. Air Force F-15E Strike Eagle, executing one of the most complex personnel recovery operations of the conflict. The jet was shot down by Iranian air defenses, triggering an immediate race against time to secure surviving aircrew before enemy forces could capture them.

The operation highlights the U.S. military's ability to penetrate heavily contested airspace and extract personnel under active pursuit, preserving both lives and sensitive information.

It signals a credible capacity to sustain air operations even in the face of advanced air defenses, reinforcing deterrence and operational reach in one of the world's most volatile theaters. To execute the recovery, U.S. forces deployed a multi-domain CSAR package combining HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters, supported by MC-130 special operations aircraft flying low-level infiltration profiles across mountainous terrain, alongside fifth-generation F-35 fighters providing stealth escort and suppression of enemy air defenses. MQ-9 Reaper drones contributed persistent ISR coverage, enabling real-time tracking of both the isolated airman and converging Iranian forces. This layered approach reflects the U.S. Air Force's Personnel Recovery Task Force (PRTF) doctrine, integrating air superiority, electronic warfare, and special operations forces into a single synchronized operation. The operation unfolded under extremely hazardous flight conditions, with U.S. C-130 variants and rescue helicopters forced to fly low and slow through complex mountainous terrain to avoid radar detection while searching for the missing airman. Such profiles significantly increase vulnerability to ground fire and infrared threats, underscoring the high risk of deep CSAR missions in denied environments, where terrain masking is both an asset and a constraint.

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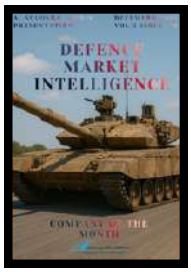

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