

# Navy scouts for utility choppers

By **Ajit K Dubey** in New Delhi

WITH the Russian Kamov-226T copter not meeting its requirements, the Navy is soon going to issue an expression of interest for procuring 110 light utility helicopters to be manufactured by an Indian firm in collaboration with a foreign firm.

Kamov-226T helicopter has been chosen to be built in a joint venture between Russia and Indian Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for supplying 200 copters to the Army and Air Force for similar requirements of replacing their vintage fleet of Cheetah and Chetak copters.

“As the strategic partnership policy has been cleared by the government, an Expression of Interest would be issued to the Indian firms by the Defence Ministry in the next few weeks to buy 110 copters, which would be under the ‘Made in India’ project,” government sources told Mail Today.

The sources said the Kamov 226T does not meet the naval requirements and therefore, a fresh tender would be required for buying the copters for the maritime force, they said.

## For use in war & rescue ops

The Navy flies Chetak copters for both shore-based and warship operations for search and rescue and surveillance operations along with a limited number of Dhruv copters for the force.

A number of Indian firms including Mahindra, L&T and Bharat Forge are likely to take part in the tender for which the foreign partner would be searched for separately by the force. The tender had been in the making for a long time. The force had to wait for more than two years for even starting the tender process as the government was formulating the strategic partnership policy during this time.

In his previous stint as the defence minister in September 2014, Arun Jaitley had scrapped a previous tender for acquiring 56 light utility copters in which scam-tainted



# 110

Helicopters to be bought under the ‘Made in India’ project

## DEAL IN THE AIR

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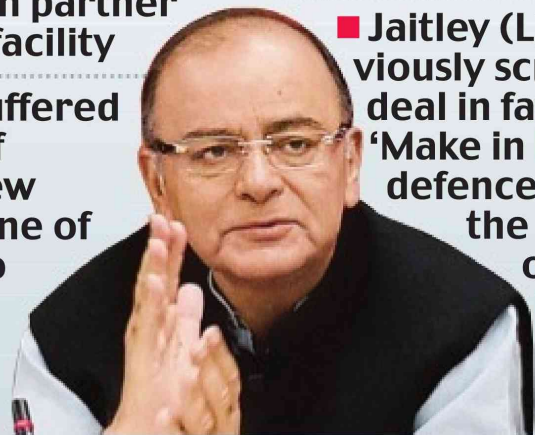
■ Select Indian companies would be called for building the copters with a foreign partner at an Indian facility

■ Navy has suffered in the field of procuring new copters, as one of its tenders to buy 16 copters had to be

scrapped due to pricing issues.

■ The Navy is also looking to come out with a fresh tender for acquiring 123 Naval Multirole Helicopters (NMRH).

■ Jaitley (L) had previously scrapped the deal in favour of ‘Make in India’ in defence sector in the early days of the Narendra Modi government.



firm AgustaWestland was also participating along with a European copter manufacturer.

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tor in the early days of the Narendra Modi government.

Under the new strategic partnership policy, select Indian companies would be called for building the copters with a foreign partner at an Indian facil-

ity with an aim of developing and promoting the local defence industry.

## Foreign vendors to participate

Foreign vendors likely to participate in the tender include Airbus Helicopters from Europe, Russian Helicopters, Sikorsky and Bell Helicopters from the US.

Navy has suffered badly in field of procuring new copters for its depleting fleet, as one of its tenders to buy 16 copters from American firm Sikorsky had to be scrapped due to issues over price and delays in acquisition.

The Navy is also looking to come out with a fresh tender for acquiring 123 Naval Multirole Helicopters (NMRH) through the Make in India route and that is touted to be one of the biggest copter tenders in the world.

Its only success in case of acquiring new copters has been in buying 16 new ALH Dhruv helicopters in partnership with the Indian Coast Guard, which is also buying an equal number of them.