

Rathore comes out in complete defence of govt

By **Rahul Kanwal**
in New Delhi

AS THE controversy over the Rafale fighter aircraft deal rages on with Congress chief Rahul Gandhi upping its attacks, Union information and broadcasting minister Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore on Monday rejected reports on former French president Francois Hollande's alleged remarks that the Indian government had proposed Anil Ambani's firm as the offset partner for Dassault Aviation in the deal.

Asked if Hollande's alleged statement makes the government vulnerable on Rafale, Rathore said, "He (Hollande) hasn't said that. He is on record when he issued a statement saying 'I have never spoken anything like this'. The Congress machinery and Rahul Gandhi are hoping that this becomes a Bofors. This is not the Bofors. This is one government that each and every Indian will vouch for as it ensures transparency in all purchases."

"When the Indian military and IAF needed certain equipment which were not even procured in the past 10 years of its (Congress) governance, we got it in. It is a government-to-government deal. Bofors had

*I&B minister
Rajyavardhan
Singh Rathore.*

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Quattrocchi in it. Uncle of somebody was also involved in it. The Congress is trying to manufacture news which is falling flat on their face," Rathore said while praising the efforts of the government.

Explaining how involving private companies boost economy, Rathore said, "For the first time, the government is ensuring defence manufacturing in India. Therefore, it is a new policy where we are bringing private companies into defence manufacturing, exactly as America does. Their private companies are manufacturing and everybody across the world is purchasing. It helps the American economy."

When asked as how the former chairman of HAL is contradicting over the issue, the I&B minister clarified,

"Nobody is manufacturing the aircraft here. The aircraft are being purchased off-the-shelf. In future, if an aircraft has to be built, the HAL or any company is free to try and bid for building it here.

Right now, the offset is not for building the aircraft. So the Congress must not confuse the people."

