

India buys 204 armoured recovery vehicles

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The WZT-3, built on a T-72M hull, will provide the manufacture basis for India's new recovery vehicles

Photo: Wikimedia

India's Army is set to receive 204 armoured recovery and repair vehicles to provide support to its T-72 battle tank fleet, at a predicted cost of approximately £890,000 per unit.

Defence Minister A. K. Antony told reporters that the Cabinet Committee on Security "cleared" the decision this month, and manufacture will fall to state-owned company Bharat Earth Movers Ltd (BEML).

Honouring an agreement made in 2003, Polish firm Bumar will provide the technology transfer to the BEML AVRs in a production cycle scheduled for completion by 2015. As the order is a repeat, no global tender was extended.

BEML currently provides ARVs for India's BMP-1 and BMP-2, but a shortage for the T-72s had created an anxiety among commanders that their main battle tanks could be left abandoned on the battlefield in the event of a breakdown or serious damage, requiring urgent ministerial attention.

Misquotes by several mainstream press sources have wrongly projected the acquisition to 600-650 units, a figure that would suggest at least one recovery vehicle per three battle tanks as the current 1700-strong fleet stands.

Details of the deal follow news of India's intention to increase the presence of its T-72s along the Himalayan borders, where Pakistan and China have also been flexing their military might.

Heightened activity on these borders will augment efforts to increase infrastructure in the North, as well as provide a solid base for operational preparedness following a **senior officer visit to the Ladakh region.**

Generals in attendance at the meeting agreed that a more active posturing in the area would be an advantage for both practical operations and psychological influence over neighbouring rivals.

Chief of the Army General VK Singh stated earlier this month that they were concerned about the presence of "around 4,000 Chinese including People's Liberation Army men in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir."

T-72s were first brought into service by the Soviet Union in 1973. Due to its low profile, robustness, firepower and light weight, it has proven to be one of the biggest heavy armour exports in the world.

Earlier this year, upgrade trials to India's variant began, with a few of the regiments also aiming to overhaul their ageing vehicles with T-90s. The improved T-72s feature 1000 BHP engines and thermal imaging for fire control systems.

The [first presentation](#) at this November's [Armoured Vehicles India](#) will focus on maintaining and upgrading the country's MBT, including efforts towards hybrid electric technology and active suppression.

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