

# India unveils light tank “Zorawar”



6 July 2024, marked a red letter day as the first prototype of the indigenous “Zorawar” light tank rolled out of the Hazira facility of L&T in Gujarat. Jointly developed by L&T and CVRDE, DRDO, in a very short span of two and a half years, it will soon enter development trials over the next six months, followed by user trials. It’s expected to be inducted into the Indian Army by 2027.

The platform was developed under “Project AFV-LT” to be deployed mainly in the high altitude region in the aftermath of Chinese aggression against India in the Himalayan region in 2020. It is named after the legendary general Zorawar Singh, who, as governor of Maharaja Gulab Singh Jamwal of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, successfully recovered Baltistan and Ladakh from Tibetan grip who were under the suzerainty of the Qing Empire of China. Even after so many years, China is eyeing to usurp swathes with acrimonious affront. As China increased the presence of their own ZTQ-15 light tank supported by older tanks (like the ZTZ-88A), a necessity to counter was felt by India.

As deployment of even the T-72 at a certain altitude is impossible, only a lighter platform seems like a viable option. Designed for rapid deployment and manoeuvrability in the mountainous region, “Zorawar” is a 25 tonne platform. Though it’s a light platform, utmost attention

has been given to lethality, survival, mobility and situational awareness! An indigenised turret (eerily similar to the John Cockerill 3105 turret) equipped with a 105mm high pressure rifled gun (reportedly designed by the Kalyani Group) is integrated into a hull designed and developed by CVRDE (possibly the composite hull developed for the Abhay ICV project). There is a 7.62mm co-axial gun as well as a 12.7mm remote weapon system from BEL.

Taking lessons from the recent conflicts around the world, twin launchers for loitering munitions have also been integrated. The main gun can attain a very high elevation, which is crucial to engaging targets on higher ground. It’s equipped with an auto-loader with bustle storage for enhanced crew safety. New generation optronics could be spotted, which will allow excellent mobility as well as accurate engagement even in the pitch dark night. While there is a limitation of protection in such a light category, the hull is equipped with

modular armour blocks as a measure against enemy attacks. “Zorawar” is reportedly powered by a 750hp engine from Cummins and a Renk transmission.

Thus, with a power-to-weight ratio of 30, it can attain excellent mobility in rough terrain. It uses composite rubber tracks (CRT) to reduce vibration and decrease fatigue, which will help enhance the combat preparedness of the crew. While the platform currently lacks any active protection system or dedicated C-UAS system, including a jammer, indigenous options will be integrated into the platform in the near future.

Overall, it’s an excellent development and a testimonial to Indian prowess. Currently, there is a requirement for a total of 354 light tanks. The Indian Army has placed an initial order of 59 “Zorawar.” The remaining 295 tanks will be manufactured under the government funded design and development project for the Indian industry in the ‘Make-I’ category of the Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP). Multiple entities are taking part in this project. So, it can be said that “Zorawar” is the pioneer of the highly complex industrial development towards self-reliance.

(All the information given is taken from various reports and does not reflect personal opinion of any kind. The actual configuration could be asserted only after official statements). ➡

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