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L&T Emerges as Frontrunner in Indian Army's Light Tank Project

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Larsen & Toubro (L&T) has taken the lead among five private sector firms competing to manufacture the Indian Army's indigenous light tank under Project Zorawar. This high-altitude combat vehicle is being developed to enhance mobility and firepower in difficult terrains like Ladakh.

The Defence Acquisition Council gave its approval in 2022 to procure 354 light tanks under the Make-I category. Out of these, 59 tanks are to be delivered through a partnership between the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and L&T. The remaining 295 units are open to competitive bids from private defence manufacturers, including Bharat Forge, Tata, and two other key contenders.

L&T has been involved with Project Zorawar since its inception. It unveiled the first prototype at its Hazira facility in July 2024, followed by an upgraded second prototype in June 2025. The latest version incorporates improvements such as enhanced suspension systems, upgraded engine cooling, and advanced onboard sensors, all based on feedback from initial trials.

The Zorawar tank weighs around 25 tonnes and is powered by a 760-horsepower Cummins diesel engine. It features a Cockerill-3105 105 mm gun turret, co-developed with Belgium's John Cockerill Defence. Other highlights include modular composite armor, an active protection system, support for loitering munitions, and AI-enabled battlefield integration.

L&T's strong performance in the project stems from its ability to coordinate complex production processes and its long-standing collaboration with DRDO. The company is also partnering with John Cockerill Defence to locally manufacture the turret system, aligning with the government's Make in India initiative.

The first prototype completed successful desert trials in September 2024 and high-altitude testing in Ladakh by December of the same year. The upgraded second prototype is scheduled for further trials in various conditions, with user testing expected to begin by August 2025. The Indian Army aims to induct the tank into service by 2027.

While five companies remain in the competition, defence analysts expect the contract to be split among multiple qualified vendors. Factors such as technological maturity, indigenous component levels, production capacity, and cost efficiency will influence the final selection.

The Zorawar programme reflects India's growing push for self-reliance in defence manufacturing. It also marks a significant shift toward private sector involvement in critical military procurement, moving beyond the traditional public sector dominance.

The light tank is expected to play a vital role in strengthening India's capabilities in mountainous and border regions, offering strategic mobility and precision in combat

operations.