

**INDIAN COAST GUARD DG VS PATHANIA UNDERTOOK HIS
MAIDEN SORTIES OF 45 MINUTES IN THE INDIGENOUS
LIGHT UTILITY HELICOPTER IN BANGALURU**

Director General V S Pathania, PTM, TM, Director General Indian Coast Guard lead a delegation of ICG officials to Helicopter Division, HAL Bangalore on 14 Nov 2022 and visited the design and development facilities of indigenously built state-of-art helicopters, tailored to needs of our Defence Forces. The visit is aimed at strengthening the procurement of aviation assets developed, designed and manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) in India, in tune with Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiatives.

ICG is exploring HAL towards development of indigenously built helicopters to replace the ageing fleet of ICG Chetak helicopters which would be completing their service life. During his visit, the Director General was presented a detailed brief on the Light Utility Helicopter (LUH) which is designed and developed as a replacement for Cheetah and Chetak helicopters and are being operated by Indian Armed Forces.

LUH is a new generation helicopter in the 3-Ton class and incorporates state-of-the-art technology features like Glass cockpit with Multi-Function Displays (MFD) and is powered by single Turbo Shaft engine with sufficient power margin to cater to any exigency demanding 'higher power setting' operations. It is envisaged that LUH will meet the emerging needs in this class of helicopters, in the coming decades. The LUH is capable of flying at cruise speed of 130Kts with a service ceiling of 6.5 Km and a range of 243Nm.

Being an ace helicopter pilot himself, the Director General undertook a maiden sortie in the LUH prototype with Wg Cdr Anil Bhambani, Test Pilot HAL, to get a first hand feel of the flying characteristics and advanced capabilities of the helicopter. The sortie was aimed at gauging the capability of the helicopter vis-a-vis its viability in meeting the maritime challenges in exercise of charter of duties of Indian Coast Guard. He later said that the helicopter has promising capabilities that encapsulates the

prowess of HAL in designing and delivering aircraft custom-built to the requirements of the ICG. It is learnt that ICG will setup a committee comprising of all stake holders including HAL, that will define the qualitative requirements of a maritime single engine aircraft replacing ICG Chetak fleet.

On 15 Nov 2022, HAL would be handing over the last of the 16 Advance Light Helicopter Mk-III (Maritime Version) to Indian Coast Guard that would soon join the existing fleet at Chennai. Shri CB Ananthakrishnan, Chairman and Managing Director, HAL shall be handing over the aircraft to Director General Indian Coast Guard in a befitting ceremony at HAL Helicopter Division.

The joining of this ALH Mk-III helicopter, call sign CG 870, in the inventory of Indian Coast Guard earmarks a tremendous leap towards self-reliance in the field of SAR and long-range maritime surveillance. ALH MK III helicopters feature array of state of art sensors, which add up to the maritime prowess of Indian Coast Guard. These helicopters have powerful Shakti engines, full glass cockpit, high-intensity searchlight, traffic alert and collision avoidance system, advanced communication systems, automatic identification system, search-and-rescue homer and automatic flight control system and is fitted with modern surveillance radar/ electro-optical equipment, which enables them to undertake the role of long range maritime reconnaissance, in addition to providing long range search and rescue, both by day and night. The Helicopter is provided with a heavy machine gun to undertake constabulary missions at sea and also a removable Medical Intensive Care Unit (MICU) to facilitate transportation of critically ill patients during MEDEVAC.

Indian Coast Guard had inked a contract with HAL in March 2017 for delivery of a total of sixteen ALH Mk-III helicopters, fully equipped with advanced sensors for its maritime operations. These aircraft are positioned at four frontline bases on Western and Eastern coasts of India and are extensively exploited for maritime surveillance, Search and Rescue and other maritime tasks.

