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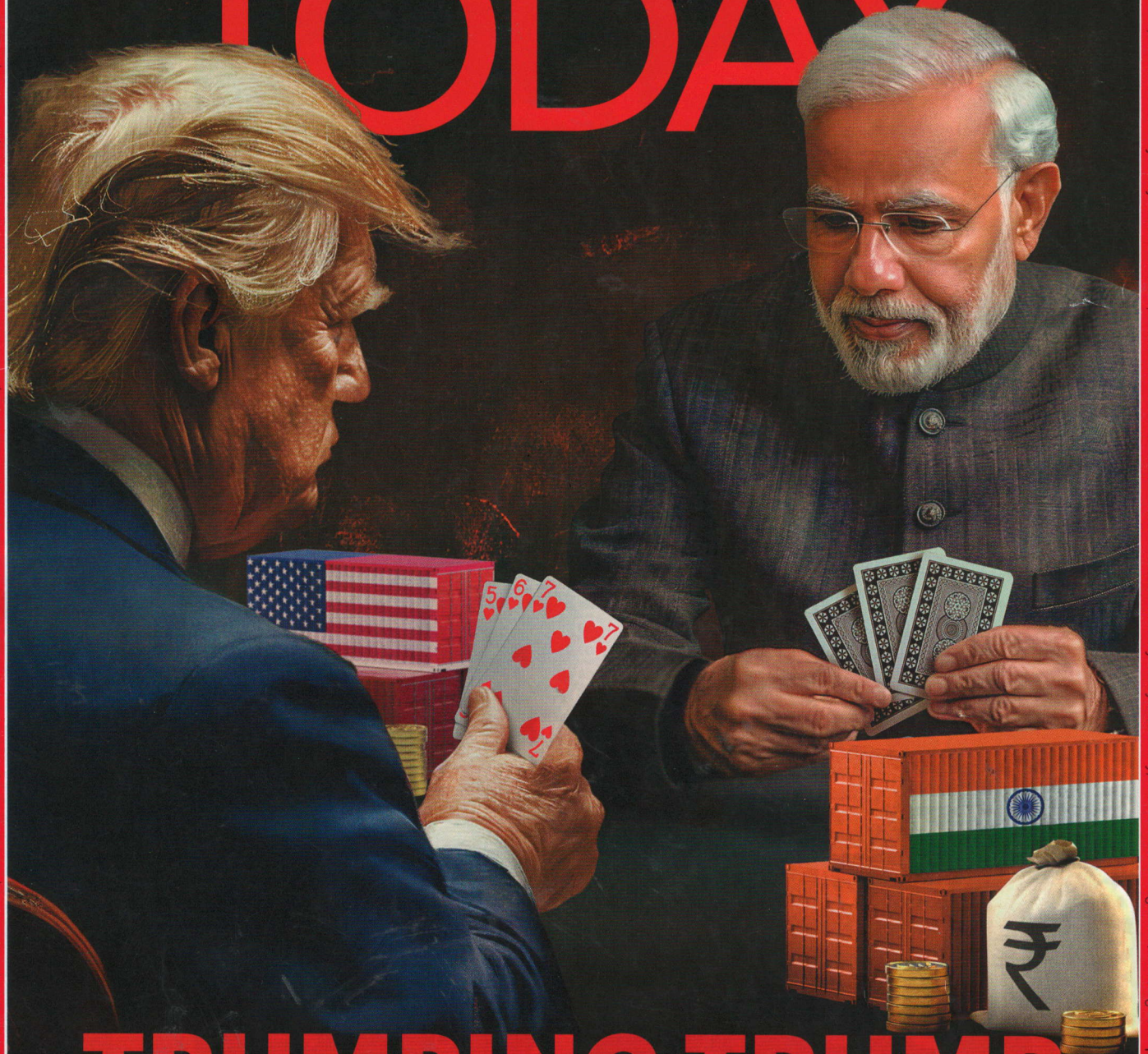
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₹ **62,700 cr.**

Defence ministry's
deal to acquire 156
Prachand
choppers from
HAL



DEFENCE

SECURING THE SKIES

By Pradip R. Sagar

ATTACK MODE
HAL Prachand,
a light combat
helicopter that was
inducted into the
Indian Air Force
in Oct. 2022

CHANDRADEEP KUMAR

In a landmark move to bolster India's aerial power, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) has signed a Rs 62,700 crore deal to acquire 156 'Made in India' Light Combat Helicopters (LCH) from Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). One of the largest steps in India's military indigenisation drive, the order signals its commitment to intertwine the pursuit of modernisation with self-reliance in defence manufacturing.

The helicopter, christened 'Pra-

chand' (or 'Fierce'), represents a significant step-up in a crucial aspect of India's defence: the rotary-wing capabilities of both its sky-borne and terrestrial forces. Unlike foreign-made attack helicopters, it is purpose-built for India's unique operational challenges, particularly high-altitude warfare. Since its induction in October 2022, the Indian Air Force (IAF) has operated 10 choppers, while the army has five. With China rapidly expanding its aerial arsenal and Pakistan bolstering

its attack helicopter fleet, the large-scale induction underscores India's resolve to maintain air superiority across diverse battlefields, from the icy peaks of the Himalayas to the scorching deserts of Rajasthan.

The Prachand's origin traces back to 1999—after the Kargil war exposed critical gaps in India's ability to deploy aerial firepower in high-altitude conflicts. The government had then seen the need for an indigenous LCH, 'made in, by and for India'. HAL prepared the