

India begins eating into China's drone exports

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3
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A few years ago, the aviation sector in India was dying a slow death. People of the country did not have much in their pockets for expensive airfares. The tables have turned and now, not just our airlines are growing, but even an erstwhile unheard technology like drones have started to dominate our market. Well, the world has also decided to take some pies of our products and we are now up for eating China's drone exports.

Indian drones are ready for exports

According to a [report](#) by Times of India, over the next few decades, Indian civilian drones are set to witness a massive uptick in their order value. The made-in-India drones have started to get export orders from foreign customers. ASCL, the largest player in Japan's drone market has tied up with Aerodyne for manufacturing export-ready drones in India. Aerodyne already has a manufacturing unit in Tamil Nadu and in the wake of huge export demand, it has decided to at least triple its manufacturing capacity.

Arjun Aggarwal, MD of Aerodyne said, "There is tremendous faith in Indian technology and trust in India. We are making in India for the world now and orders have started pouring in from Japan, Asia and the Gulf, among other places. There is a clear intent to eliminate the traditional drone supply chain (read from China),"

Aerodyne is not the only company working in drone export segments. Indian drones are in high-demand all around the world. Garuda Aerospace, another big player in the drone sector has [got orders](#) for sending 12,000 drones. A major chunk of these orders is from Malaysia, South America, Panama and Africa. About 9,000 of them will be used for agricultural purposes such as spraying seeds.

PM Modi recognised the importance of drones

Though, India is just an emerging player in the drone sector, the fact that countries are preferring it over established ones like China tells you the amount of work the country has put in to develop this sector. A few years back, Indians were happy only with watching videos of foreign drones bombing other countries. Very few thought that drones could have alternate uses in India. In fact, by September 2021, total turnover of all domestic manufacturers was only ₹ 60 crore.

PLI scheme and relaxed norms for drones

That is where PM Modi and his team pitched in. They identified the extent to which drones could positively impact the daily lives of Indians. Being the visionary he is, PM Modi included drone manufacturing under PLI scheme in September last year. On 15th September 2021, the Indian government [approved](#) the PLI scheme for drones and their components. The government is providing a total incentive of Rs 120 crore for the same.

The civil aviation ministry is [expecting](#) a total investment of Rs 5,000 crores in the next 3 years. The annual sales turnover of the drone manufacturing industry is expected to grow from INR 60 crores in 2020-21 to over INR 900 crores in 2023-24. The drone manufacturing industry is alone expected to create more than 10, 000 direct jobs in the next 3 years.

Read more: [With the government's new rules and regulations, a drone revolution is about to begin in India](#)

In February this year, Modi government [provided](#) another boost to the sector by making it easier for Indians to fly drones. Well, as they say, you reap what you sow. India sowed heavy investment in drones and the industry returned the favour with faster than expected growth in the sector.

But, how did we beat China?

However, it is still baffling to some people that Indian drones are export-ready. See, internal use is okay, since people may ignore minor deficiencies due to patriotic fervour. But, the export market is crude, either you provide the required quality or you are out of the market. So, how did Indian drones leave such a remarkable imprint on their consumers? And more importantly, how did it replace China?

The answer is complex. Part of the answer is that Indian Drones are much more efficient and cheap compared to global ones. While our Drones are competing with the best in the world, we are producing them with extremely little investment. One Indian drone costs [anywhere](#) between 12.5 to 20 percent of its global counterparts. Regarding China, well it would be suffice to say that China hit the axe on its foot.

China's drones have the same problem that every other Chinese product has. While it may not be as defective as other products, but using Chinese drones is a national security concern for the countries operating them. Chinese drones gather data from the countries in which they operate and send it back to Chinese servers. No country would like to risk that and that is why last year, the USA [imposed](#) restrictions on a Chinese 'major'.

Through meticulous public private partnership, the drone sector is going to drive India's story in upcoming years. Apart from giving employment opportunities to the people, drones provide a strategic edge to the country exporting them. Export orders are just a start. Next 30 years of air space are soon going to be reserved for Indian drone manufacturers.