

# Emerging as defence manufacturing hub, UP key to Atmanirbhar Bharat

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LUCKNOW: Uttar Pradesh is fast emerging as the major hub of defence equipment manufacturing and is playing a crucial role in making the country self-reliant in the sector.

Recently, the state added another feather to its cap when the central government approved a project for the manufacturing of over 5 lakh AK-203 assault rifles in a unit in Korwa of Amethi. A senior government official said the project is a significant stride towards making UP a key contributor in defence manufacturing in the country. This project will be completed in partnership with Russia.

The 7.62 x 39 mm caliber AK-203 rifle is set to replace the in-service INSAS Rifle inducted over three decades ago.

"The AK-203 assault rifles, with an effective range of 300 metres, are light weight, robust and easy to use modern rifles with proven technology that will enhance the combat potential of soldiers to adequately meet operational challenges," a government official said.

The special project has been planned under Indo-Russian Rifles Pvt Ltd (IRRPL). Last month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had also laid the foundation for Rs 400 crore Bharat Dynamics plant to make propulsion system for anti-tank guided missiles, in Jhansi node of UP Defence Corridor.

The Centre had decided to set up two defence industrial corridors in the country – one in Uttar Pradesh and the other in Tamil Nadu.

The Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor has nodes in Agra, Aligarh, Jhansi, Chitrakoot, Lucknow and Kanpur.

Inspired by traditional Indian weapons used in man-to-man combat, a Noida-based firm, Apastron Pvt Ltd, recently developed non-lethal weapons for security forces. The requirement of non-lethal weapons for the Indian Army was felt after 20 jawans were reportedly martyred in June 2020 in combat against the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China in Galwan Valley.

Two companies, Encore Research Lab LLP and Allen & Alvan Pvt Ltd, are investing Rs 550 crore and Rs 30.75 crore, respectively, to set up plants in Aligarh to manufacture sophisticated drones. These unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) will not only be of great help for Indian security forces, but can also be used in disaster management, and to enhance security and agriculture, a government official said. He added that 10 hectares of land has been allotted to companies.

According to Uttar Pradesh Expressways Industrial Development Authority (UPEIDA), 29 companies have submitted their proposals to the state government for setting up factories near Aligarh, 11 around Lucknow, eight in Kanpur and six in Jhansi.

Based on the requests received from these companies, UPEIDA has so far allotted 55.4 hectares land to 19 reputed companies in Aligarh node.

Together, these companies will invest Rs 1,245.75 crore to manufacture defence equipment. In February 2020, Uttar Pradesh had also hosted the Defence Expo 2020.

As per government officials, defence ministers of nearly 40 countries, over 3,000 foreign delegates from 70 countries and over 1,000 delegates from India had participated in the event. More than 200 MoUs were inked during the Expo. Many companies are ready to set foot in the state in view of better law and order situation and an investor-friendly atmosphere, a government spokesperson said.