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Lucknow shoots for the sky with Brahmos missile

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Propelled by mega investments, Uttar Pradesh is shooting for the sky in the defence sector. Driven by the Make in India initiative, the state has embarked on the trajectory of becoming a major defence manufacturing hub in the country. The indigenous BrahMos missile will now be made in Lucknow too and the site has been identified in the city's Sarojininagar area. To achieve self-reliance in the aerospace and defence sectors, the Centre has announced setting up of two defence industrial corridors — one in UP and the other in Tamil Nadu.

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BRAHMOS HUB IN LUCKNOW The credit for bringing the BrahMos missile manufacturing unit to Lucknow goes to defence minister and local MP Rajnath Singh. BrahMos unit will produce 80 to 100 missiles every year starting from 2024. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath summed it up with a roar: “Ab Lucknow muskaraega bhi aur dahaadega bhi” (Lucknow will now smile as well as roar).” According to Atul D Rane, CEO and MD, BrahMos Aerospace, said, “The construction work of the unit is in full swing at Lucknow site which is spread over 200 acres.

Production of the current version of BrahMos will start once the facility is set up. The first BrahMos of the current version can be rolled out by mid-2024.”

The timeline to roll out the future generation of missiles (BrahMos-NG) will be 5-7 years. The manufacturing hub will empower the missile industry consortium in the country and help in creating an ecosystem for futuristic weapons and technology within the state and the country. BrahMos Aerospace has planned to deliver 80-100 missiles a year from the Lucknow facility spreading across 200 acres. “Numbers are highly dependent on the orders we receive,” Rane said.

BrahMos-NG can be launched from submarines, ships, aircraft, or land. It is smaller, lighter and has smarter dimensions and is being designed for deployment on a wider number of modern military platforms. It will bolster the Indian army’s combat capability and flexibility over the next few years. The project will provide direct employment to 500 engineers and technicians. In addition, 5,000 people will get indirect employment. With the establishment of ancillary units related to the defence industry, about 10,000 people will get employment. THE SCOPE FOR

DEFENCE SECTOR IN UTTAR PRADESH

Uttar Pradesh is the fourth largest state and the third largest economy in the country. With a population of more than 22 crore, UP has the highest number of available labour force and is among the top five manufacturing states. It also ranks first in terms of MSME units in the country. The Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor (UPDIC) took off to an encouraging start with the announcement of investments worth over Rs 3,700 crore in defence production at an event organised in Aligarh in August 2018.

The Uttar Pradesh Expressways Industrial Development Authority (UPEIDA) was made the nodal agency to execute this project in conjunction with other state agencies. The state government plans to establish common facility centres; centres of excellence, and skill development centres to facilitate best practices, research and development and skill development. Hence, the envisaged corridor not only targets setting up of manufacturing hubs, but also aims at generating employment to cater to the most populous state in the country.

HUB OF SATELLITE MANUFACTURING TOO

Besides the BrahMos missiles, satellites too will be manufactured in UP. Hyderabad-based Ananth Technologies Limited (ATL), an aerospace manufacturer that provides hardware and software services, is expected to invest Rs 3,000 crore in the state for making satellites. To support the space sector, the government will set up a research and development support hub in IIT-Kanpur too.

DEFENCE INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR

The UP defence corridor is planned across six nodes – Lucknow, Kanpur, Jhansi, Agra, Aligarh and Chitrakoot — covering the central, eastern, and western regions of the state along the Golden Quadrilateral that connects Delhi to Kolkata via expressways. Defence minister Rajnath Singh has said that UP has full capability to reach any height. “Uttar Pradesh, which was once considered a deterrent in the country’s economic growth, is now becoming its growth engine. Apart from manufacturing BrahMos, it will become a hub for satellite development too,” Rajnath said.