

Amethi to deliver 7k AK-203 rifles to Army in 2-3 weeks

Arshad Afzaal Khan | TNN

Ayodhya: Indo-Russian Rifles Private Limited (IRRPL), a joint venture company which manufactures AK-203 assault rifles in Amethi, is set to deliver the next batch of Kalashnikov AK-203 rifles to the Indian Army in the next 2-3 weeks.

The company, mandated under a Rs 5,200 crore contract to supply 6,01,427 rifles to the armed forces by Oct 2032, plans to finish deliveries by Dec 2030, Maj Gen S K Sharma, CEO and MD of IRRPL, told reporters during an interaction at the factory.

“Around 48,000 rifles have been delivered so far. Another 7,000 will be handed over in the next 2-3 weeks and 15,000 additional by Dec this year,” Maj Gen Sharma said.

IRRPL is adhering to the timeline and aims to achieve 100% indigenization by the end of this year. The AK-203 is a modern version of the Kalashnikov series, he said.

The Army is replacing the decades-old INSAS rifles with the AK-203, a Russian-origin assault rifle. India signed a contract worth Rs 5,000 crore with Russia in July 2021 to produce over 6,00,000 AK-203 rifles domestically, with technology transfer from Russia.

According to a statement issued by IRRPL, the gun is

Representational picture



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ideal for counter-terrorism operations. Not only does it offer better accuracy, but its improved ergonomics and adaptability make it ideal for counter-terrorism operations and high-altitude warfare. Licensed production of the rifles officially began in Jan 2023. Given the dual threats along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China and ongoing cross-border activities from Pakistan, rapid changes were made.

The AK-203, a modernised version of the Kalashnikov series, will become the primary assault rifle for soldiers deployed along the northern and western borders, including the Line of Control and the Line of Actual Control. The rifle, also named 'Sher' in India, replaces the INSAS in service. Initially, 70,000 rifles were imported to meet urgent requirements before full-scale production began at IRRPL under Atmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India initiatives.

The joint venture, set up under an intergovernmental agreement and described as the “younger brother of BrahMos” by Maj Gen Sharma, has 50.5% Indian shareholding and 49.5% Russian stake. It operates from an 8.5-acre facility in Amethi and is not a part of the erstwhile ordnance factories structure.

The workflow is overseen by a board of directors comprising four representatives each from India and Russia, besides senior defence officials. Currently, the factory employs over 260 personnel, including permanent Russian experts, and aims to scale up staffing to 537, of which 90% will be locals.

IRRPL has achieved 50% indigenisation and aims to deliver the first fully indigenous AK-203 by Dec 2025, after which production will ramp up to 1.5 lakh rifles annually. The company has received 100% Transfer of Technology (ToT) from Russia, with all testing now indigenised. Earlier, parts had to be sent to Russia for validation, the CEO said.

Each rifle undergoes 120 processes – “every rifle goes through 120 hands”, Maj Gen Sharma said – and comprises around 50 components and 180 sub-parts. It has a life of 15,000 rounds. “Every material now has an alternate source in India,” he added.