

# DefExpo 2018 will highlight India as an emerging defence production hub



Anil Bhat

focus

DefExpo 2018 has earmarked at least half the space for domestic exhibitors, making it the biggest ever opportunity to integrate with the global supply chain of defence manufacturing...

It all began with a two-day "Defence Industry Development Meet" organised by department of defence production, ministry of defence (MoD) in Chennai on January 18, 2018, when in the presence of Tamil Nadu chief minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced that the next Defence Expo would be organised in Chennai between April 11 and 14, 2018.

The meet's aim was to initiate the forging of new partnerships with private industry with the aim of achieving self-reliance in defence production under the "Make in India" initiative of the Union government and of encouraging and facilitating participation of private industries, especially micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in defence manufacturing.

Focusing on indigenisa-

tion, import substitution and technology infusion, the event will provide private firms/companies, especially vendors from Tamil Nadu region an overview of the existing defence procurement policy, indigenisation and outsourcing procedures of defence public sector undertakings (DPSUs)/Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) and update them on the recent government policy initiatives to promote indigenisation and outsourcing and opportunities thereon.

The highlights of the event were:

► The department of defence production presented policy initiatives for supporting Indian vendors, especially MSME in the field of defence production.

► Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) showcased the technologies available for the private sector for commercial exploitation. The defence minister handed over three representative Transfer of Technology agreements of DRDO to industry — one each for the Army, Navy and the Air Force.

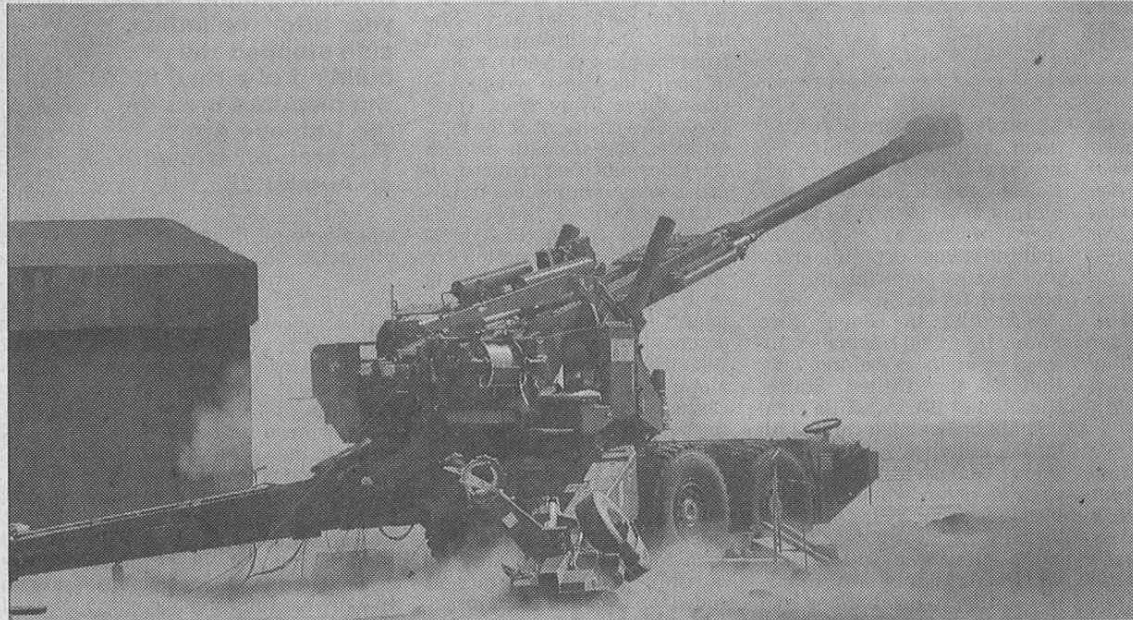
► HAL, BEL, BEML, BDL, Midhani showcased over 50 products for indigenisation by the industry.

► OFB offered more than 20 products to vendors for indigenisation.

► MDL, GRSE, GSL showcased vendor development opportunities.

► Defence minister released the simplified "Make-II" procedure, which stipulates relaxed eligibility criteria, minimal documentation, provisions for suo-motu proposals from individuals/industry, particularly for innovative solutions and relaxed eligibility criteria for start ups. This procedure envisages for assurance of order on successful development of prototype.

A Defence Investor Cell has been set up by department of defence production to directly interact with all interested investors with regard to poten-



(top) India to proudly showcase the indigenous 155mm ATAG gun at DefExpo 2018

tial investment and queries related to policy and projects handled by the MoD.

More than 1,000 vendors participated in the two-day event for which the Indian Army, Navy and the Air Force projected their requirements, especially related to MSMEs, for indigenisation. Ministry of MSME presented the policy initiatives to support MSME.

Department of industrial policy and promotion brought out the initiatives taken by the government for "ease of doing business" processes and issues related to licensing of defence products. Ministry of home affairs presented their requirement for police and paramilitary forces. DPSUs/OFB are providing facility for on-the-spot

vendor registration for prospective vendors for supplying defence needs.

The defence minister also highlighted the recent policy initiatives, including "Make-II" procedure released by the government on January 16, 2018, the defence innovation hub in Coimbatore and the Defence Investor Cell. She said more initiatives to promote "Make in India" in defence would be taken up.

The defence ministry's press release dated March 4, 2018 states that DefExpo 2018 will, for the first time, project India's defence manufacturing capabilities to the world. This is reflected in the tagline for the expo: "India: The Emerging Defence Manufacturing Hub". DefExpo 2018 will brand India as an exporter of several defence systems and compo-

nents for all three services — Army, Navy and Air Force. While showcasing strengths of India's substantial public sector, it will also uncover India's growing private industry and spreading MSME base for components and sub-systems.

DefExpo 2018 will present Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd's various flying platforms, including domestically designed and manufactured fourth-generation Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) — Tejas; Advanced Light Helicopter — Dhruv both of which have civil as well as combat variants; Light Combat Helicopter for which IOC was received recently; Dornier civilian aircraft for which DGCA clearance was received and which is likely to be inducted for regional connectivity purposes. Apart from HAL's

Asia, Asean and the Africa region.

Under land systems, India will reveal the 155mm artillery gun "Dhanush" and the 155mm advanced towed artillery gun (ATAG), for the first time designed and developed by DRDO in partnership with Kalyani Group, Tata Power and OFBs. Also showcased will be battle tanks produced by/in India, including MBT Arjun, T90 and T-72 and Bridge Laying Tanks with a span of over 70 feet and India's plans to manufacture about 750,000 assault rifles, 350,000 carbines and about 40,000 LMGs.

India's significant missile and rocket manufacturing capabilities, including BrahMos surface-to-air, air-to-air and sea-to-air missiles, Akash missile system and Pinaka rockets are expected to be a major attraction.

Given the focus on highlighting India as an emerging defence production hub, DefExpo 2018 has earmarked at least half the space for domestic exhibitors, making it the biggest ever opportunity to integrate with the global supply chain of defence manufacturing. Emphasis is being given to invite delegations from countries, which have shown keen interest in India's weapon systems and platforms to provide a boost to overall defence manufacturing in the country and to its export potential.

For participants in DefExpo 2018, the website (<http://www.defexpoindia.in/>) provides all necessary information in a comprehensive manner, with complete registration details for international business visitors, companies, MSMEs or general visitors. DefExpo is open for business visitors from April 11-14, 2018 and for general public on April 14.

It will be interesting to note the outcome of DefExpo 2018 being held in South India for the first time, considering the facts that many defence-related scientists and officials hail from the southern states and that many defence research and production organisations are located there.

The writer, a retired Army officer, is a defence and security analyst based in New Delhi