

Made in India AK-47! Russian maker plans joint production

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The advanced versions of the popular AK-47 rifles may soon be 'Made in India' as the Russian maker of the weapon — Kalashnikov Concern — is working out a business agreement with Indian companies for the joint licensed production of these assault rifles in India. Kalashnikov Concern is Russia's largest manufacturer of automatic and sniper weapons.

For years, Indian security forces have relied on the AK-47 rifles, largely imported from Russia, Bulgaria and other countries. The lightweight and easy to use weapon is a favourite of all arms of Indian security forces and military. Given the popularity of the weapon and its demand in India, the company that makes AK-47 rifles is now planning to have collaboration with Indian partner under the India-Russia military cooperation. Joint production of the assault rifles in India will not only prevent the country looking outside for its weapons need but also mean the top range of rifles — AK-100 family — will be available



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- ❑ Joint production of the assault rifles in India will not only prevent the country looking outside for its weapons need but also mean the top range of rifles — AK-100 family — will be available to India at a lower cost
- ❑ The agreement for licensed joint production is expected to be signed soon
- ❑ Chief Executive Officer of the Kalashnikov Concern Alexei Krivoruchko said the company has already conducted preliminary negotiations with a number of companies in India and it is ready to arrange a licensed production of its weapon in India



Alexei
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In an exclusive interview to *The Pioneer*, Chief Executive Officer of the Kalashnikov Concern Alexei Krivoruchko said the company has already conducted preliminary negotiations with a number of companies in India and it is ready to arrange a licensed production of its weapon in India.

“The high quality of our products has awakened an interest to organise a licensed pro-

duction of the AK series assault rifles... We are ready to collaborate with any company having all necessary permits from the Indian Government authorities and actual feasibility for organising such kind of production... We are ready to immediately implement the project as soon as an appropriate request will appear in the JSC ‘Rosoboronexport,’” Krivoruchko said. He, however, refused to reveal the name of the company that Kalashnikov will be collaborating with in India.

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Talking about his company's plans in India and how this will help Indian soldiers, Krivoruchko said that going by Russian Government's policy towards India, which is a strategic partner, Kalashnikov Concerns will go for 'transfer of technology' tie up between his company and the Indian counterpart.

So what made Kalashnikov think for a joint production venture in India when India is already importing from Russia and others? "Taking into consideration a large capacity of the Indian market, we believe that arrangement of the licensed production will make it possible to meet the demands in good time. Besides, the Defence industry of India will receive manufacturing techniques of up-to-date arms, will have an opportunity to dynamically re-equip security and law enforcement agencies, give new jobs to people," Krivoruchko said.

Without getting into the specifics of the kind of rifles likely to be made in India with Kalashnikov's support, Krivoruchko said in his opinion it is best to go for the popular AK series first and then

expand to other weapons. "It is best to start collaboration in organising of small arms production in India from the assault rifles of the AK series as the most production-friendly construction. Later on we may consider launching production of pistols and sniper rifles," he added.

What about the cost effectiveness of the Kalashnikov rifles made in India? "Our experience suggests the most optimum variant to sign a contract for delivering a shipment of ready-made products and simultaneously start arranging the licensed production. It will be easier to begin with assembling of large assemblies using the supplied semi-knocked down sets and gradually come to indigenous production of the rifle parts. From a certain level of localisation the cost of a finished product will decrease," Krivoruchko said. However, Krivoruchko had in 2015 said that the Concern had plans of making at least 50,000 rifles a year with a view to building up output further.

With Government working hard to position India as a manufacturer and exporter of small arms and missiles the

possibility of exporting AK assault rifles to a third country cannot be ruled out. However, Kalashnikov Concern would not like to comment about it as the decision for such things are taken by the Russian government. "Re-export of the weaponry made under licence is empowered to the Russian Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation," Krivoruchko said.

Meanwhile, there were news that Pakistan too is interested in buying Kalashnikov rifles from Russia, something that India may not like. But Kalashnikov Concern does not want to get dragged into such things and Krivoruchko said the issues of military-technical cooperation between the Russian Federation and foreign countries are regulated by the Russian Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation and JSC "Rosoboronexport".

Government of India had recently notified the new Arms Act 2016 that allows private companies to manufacture and proof test small weapons. In India the Ordinance Factory Board has been making INSAS rifles for domestic use.