

## Defence manufacturing up 60%, says DRDO chief

### ‘Make in India programme has also made Indian companies export-ready’

In the last three years of the Central government’s Make In India programme, the country has seen a 60% increase in defence equipment manufacturing, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) chairman S. Christopher said here on Saturday. He was presiding over a function to commemorate the handing over of the 1,000th integrated propulsion airframe system hardware for the Akash missile. The hardware was manufactured by L&T Defence for Bharat Dynamics Ltd. Later, he told reporters that the ‘Make In India’ campaign had also brought about a change in the armed forces so much so that the DRDO and defence industries had received orders for equipment that they thought would be imported. The indigenisation of several products and their manufacture by both the public and private sector had improved product development in the sector making the Indian companies export-ready, he said.

### ‘Quality not an issue’

The queries the country had been getting for export of the Akash missile system was a case in point, Mr. Christopher said and pointed out that after the delivery of 40 Light Combat Aircraft, the Indian Air Force officers were of the opinion that it was as good as any fighter aircraft available internationally and was ready for export. Earlier, the quality dropped when numbers went up. Now, quality was no longer an issue for defence equipment manufactured in the country, he said. In response to a question on delay in development of products by the DRDO and their manufacture by industries, he pointed out that compared to the gestation period taken by defence industries in other countries, it was not so. When India began its Integrated Missile Development Programme, it used to be the case because the entire ecosystem had to be built including testing facilities.



But that was the case now.

In future, the time taken by DRDO could further come down as it was flush with the additional ₹2,000 crore that the Central government had sanctioned in this budget, he noted. The establishment of defence corridor and park would help the micro, small and medium enterprises as they could complement one another to even manufacture high-end precision equipment or even complete systems. Bharat Dynamics Limited CMD V. Udaya Bhaskar said the company would complete its order for the Akash missile to the Air Force by mid-2019 and thereafter begin production for a variant of the surface to air missile for the Army.