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# India's Defence Decade (2014-2026): Indigenisation and the Export Surge

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CURATED &amp; WRITTEN BY

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# India's Defence Decade (2014-2026): Indigenisation and the Export Surge

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## WHY IN NEWS

On June 18, 2026, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) released a review of India's defence sector over 2014 to 2026, highlighting a sharp rise in indigenous production and a dramatic surge in defence exports. The numbers underline a strategic shift from import dependence towards self-reliance under the "Atmanirbhar Bharat" framework.

## THE HEADLINE NUMBERS

INDICATOR	FIGURE (FY26 UNLESS NOTED)
Indigenous defence production ( <a href="https://ujjyari.com/terms/indigenous-defence-production/">https://ujjyari.com/terms/indigenous-defence-production/</a> )	Rs 1.78 lakh crore
Defence exports	Rs 38,424 crore
Export growth (over 12 years)	+5,500%
Export destinations	80+ countries
Exporting firms	145
Export target	Rs 50,000 crore by 2029
Private-sector share of production	24%

A rise of more than 5,500% in exports over twelve years takes India from a marginal arms exporter to a credible supplier reaching over 80 countries. The Rs 50,000 crore export target by 2029 signals that the trajectory (<https://ujjiyari.com/vocab/trajectory/>) is meant to continue.

## THE POLICY ENABLERS

The transformation rests on a deliberate (<https://ujjiyari.com/vocab/deliberate/>) scaffolding of policy instruments rather than a single scheme.

### Procurement and Indigenisation

- **Defence Acquisition Procedure** (<https://ujjiyari.com/terms/defence-acquisition-procedure/>) **(DAP) 2020:** Created the “Buy Indian-IDDm” (Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured) as the most-preferred procurement category, prioritising domestic design over mere assembly.
- **Positive Indigenisation** (<https://ujjiyari.com/vocab/indigenisation/>) **Lists:** More than 500 items notified that can be procured only from domestic sources after specified timelines, closing the door on imports of those systems.

### Innovation and Start-ups

- **iDEX** (<https://ujjiyari.com/terms/idex-defence-innovation/>) **(Innovations for Defence Excellence):** A platform linking start-ups, MSMEs and innovators to the armed forces; it had awarded 551 contracts by March 2026.
- **ADITI scheme:** Acing Development of Innovative Technologies with iDEX, supporting deep-tech and critical defence technologies.
- **Technology Development Fund:** Funds Indian industry and academia to develop defence technologies.

### Industrial Geography

- **Two Defence Industrial Corridors:** One in Uttar Pradesh and one in Tamil Nadu, anchoring manufacturing clusters and supply chains.

## ANALYSIS: FROM BUYER TO BUILDER

India was for decades among the world’s largest arms importers, a strategic vulnerability (<https://ujjiyari.com/vocab/vulnerability/>) in both cost and supply security. The decade’s reforms attack that on three fronts. First, demand-side measures (positive lists, IDDm priority) guarantee a domestic market, giving manufacturers the certainty to invest. Second, innovation pipelines (iDEX, ADITI, TDF) widen the supplier base beyond the

traditional public-sector units to start-ups and private firms, now 24% of production. Third, the export push converts scale into strategic influence, since defence exports build long-term partnerships and reduce per-unit costs through larger production runs.

The challenge ahead is to climb the value chain: moving from sub-systems and platforms towards cutting-edge, high-technology systems, and deepening the design-and-development base so that “Made in India” increasingly means “Designed in India.”

## WAY FORWARD

- **Deepen R&D:** Raise the share of indigenous design and core technology, not just assembly.
- **Strengthen MSMEs:** Convert iDEX winners into sustained, scaled suppliers.
- **Quality and after-sales:** Build export credibility through lifecycle support to retain partner countries.

## UPSC RELEVANCE

**Prelims:** DAP 2020 and Buy Indian-IDDM; iDEX and ADITI; Positive Indigenisation Lists; Defence Industrial Corridors (UP, Tamil Nadu).

**Mains (GS3):** “Atmanirbharta in defence is as much an economic strategy as a security imperative (<https://ujivari.com/vocab/imperative/>).” Critically examine India’s defence indigenisation and export performance over the last decade.

## FACTS CORNER

### ★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

Indigenous production (FY26): Rs 1.78 lakh crore.

Defence exports (FY26): Rs 38,424 crore, up more than 5,500% in 12 years, to 80+ countries via 145 firms.

Export target: Rs 50,000 crore by 2029.

Key enablers: DAP 2020 (Buy Indian-IDDM), Positive Indigenisation Lists (500+ items), iDEX (551 contracts by March 2026), ADITI, Technology Development Fund.

Defence Industrial Corridors: Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

**Sources:** *PIB* (<https://pib.gov.in>), *The Hindu* (<https://www.thehindu.com>)

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