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Self-Reliance in India's Defence Sector

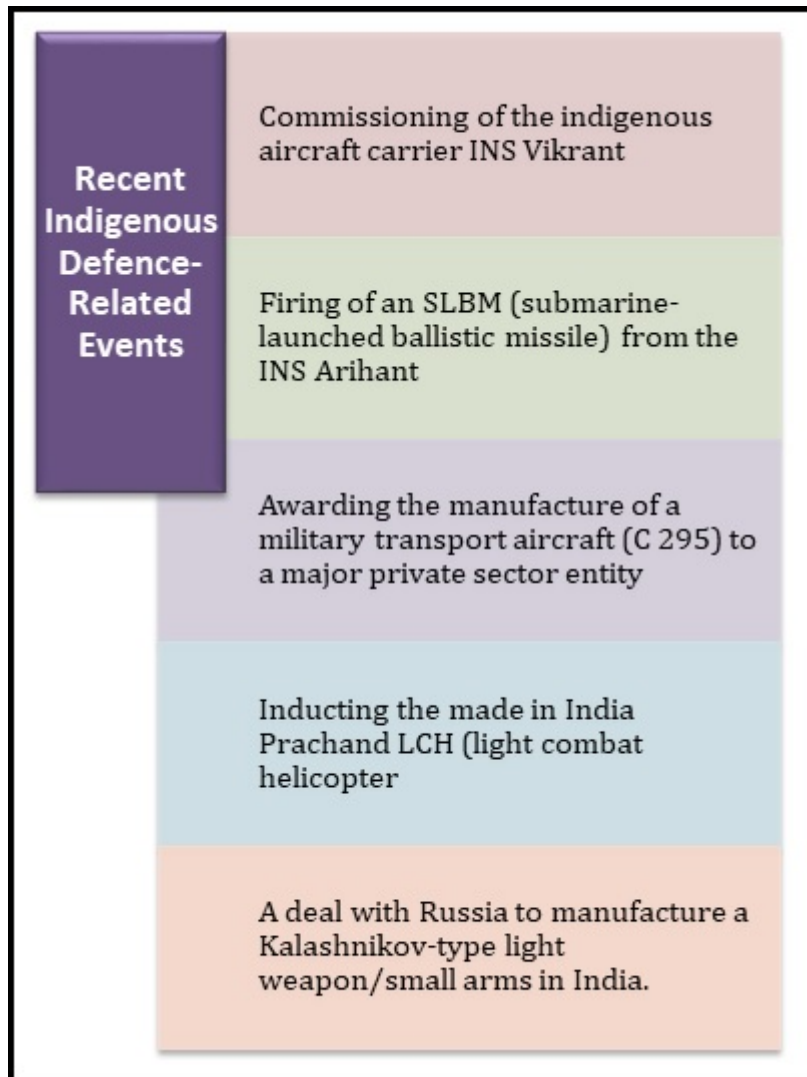
Why in news?

DefExpo 2022 held in Gandhinagar, Gujarat drew attention on the need for India to acquire the appropriate degree of self-reliance in the defence sector.

What are the current issues in the Indian defence sector?

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) yearbook has highlighted India as the top weapons importer during 2017-2021.

- **Russian imports** - The high dependency index on foreign suppliers (on Russia) for major military inventory items is one of the major issues.
- **Compromise on strategic autonomy** - It induces a macro national vulnerability and dilutes India's credible strategic autonomy.
- **Gaps in combat capacity** - The current gaps in combat capacity expose the gaps in the Indian ability to safeguard core national security interests.
 - The Galwan setback against China is an example.
- **Other challenges** - Other challenges faced by the Indian defence manufacturing ecosystem includes
 - The Russian invasion of Ukraine
 - The Covid disrupting the global economy and supply chains
 - Weakening rupee



What are the impediments in acquiring self-reliance in the defence sector?

In 2021-22, defence exports from India reached 1.59 billion dollars and the government has set a target to reach 5 billion dollars in the coming years.

- **Domestic competence** - India does not have the domestic competence to fully design and manufacture any significant combat weapon/platform.
- It depends on the foreign supplier for the critical components.
- **Investment in R&D** - India has not invested enough in the national research and development (R&D) effort.
- As per data collated by the World Bank, India has been able to allocate only 0.66% of GDP (2018) towards R&D, while the world average is 2.63%.
- **Manufacturing capabilities** - Composite combat and manufacturing capabilities have not been reviewed and strengthened appropriately.
- India missed the industrial design and manufacturing bus, a national competence demonstrated by nations like South Korea and China, over the last five decades.
- **Technological advances** - India is yet to acquire a profile in the manufacture of the semiconductor chip which is the new currency of national prosperity and military power.

What lies ahead?

- There are some promising green shoots regarding the 155-mm artillery guns being designed and manufactured in the country.
- For a meaningful indigenisation and credible atmanirbharta (self-reliance), a conducive ecosystem with sustained funding is the need of the hour.
- The techno-strategic landscape of semiconductor industry must be tilted to favour India.

Quick facts

DefExpo 2022

- DefExpo 2022 was the 12th and largest-ever defence exhibition with the theme - **‘Path to Pride’**.
- It was launched at the Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre in **Gujarat’s Gandhinagar**.
- This is the first defence expo where **only Indian companies** are participating and it features only Made in India equipment.
- The expo is being attended by 53 friendly countries from Africa.
- For the first time, an investor outreach event **‘Invest for Defence’** was organised bringing together businesses and investors.
- **Key highlights of the DefExpo 2022**
 - Launching of the Mission DefSpace
 - Laying foundation of the Deesa airfield
 - Unveiling of the HTT-40 indigenous trainer aircraft designed by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited
- On the sidelines of the expo, African nations took part in the [2nd India Africa Defence Dialogue \(IADD\)](#) in Gandhinagar.

References

1. [The Indian Express | What India needs to do to plug its defence gap](#)
2. [Business Today | DefExpo 2022](#)
3. [PIB | DefExpo 2022 propels ‘Aatmanirbharta’ in defence to next level](#)



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