

Foreign firms keen to set up plants in India to supply raw materials for bulletproof jackets

Former DRDO chief said that four to five foreign companies have shown interest to set up units in India

New Delhi: In a boost to the Centre's 'Make In India' drive, four to five overseas companies have evinced interest in setting up plants in India to provide some of the raw materials used for manufacturing bulletproof jackets for the Army, a NITI Aayog member said on Sunday.

VK Saraswat, who is also a former DRDO Chief, said Indian companies producing bulletproof jackets import Chinese raw materials due to price advantage. "There are efforts going on now to invite collaboration from foreign companies who are willing to set up companies in India to produce some of the raw materials used for manufacturing bulletproof jackets for the Army. So far, four to five foreign companies have shown interest to set up units in India. It will be premature to give their names at this stage," the NITI Aayog member said.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) had asked the NITI Aayog to prepare a road map for "incentivising" domestic manufacturing of lightweight body armours (bulletproof jackets). The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has also finalised quality norms for body armours to be used by Indian forces, according to Saraswat. He said it has been agreed that future tendering of bulletproof jackets will be as per BIS norms.

According to government projections, more than 3 lakh bulletproof jackets will be required by Indian armed forces, Saraswat said, adding that "based on that, armed forces have already placed order with private companies in India for production of bulletproof jackets". Indian companies were earlier procuring raw materials for bulletproof jackets from the US and Europe.

Now, most of them are being obtained from China due to lower prices. The idea of manufacturing lightweight body armours in India was mooted as the bulletproof vests currently in use by the Indian forces are very heavy.

Indian companies like Kanpur-based MKU and Tata Advanced Materials export body armours to armed forces of many countries. If the lightweight bulletproof vests and helmets are produced in bulk in the country, it will ensure low-cost supplies and end to the endless wait for foreign vendors to supply the equipment.

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