

# Pinaka launchers to missiles, Pune adds to defence industry lineup

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Minister of State for Defence Ajay Bhatt inaugurated a production facility for a defence component manufacturer called Nibe in Pune on Monday.

This 250,000 square feet shop floor will produce components for a new generation of Indian weaponry — Pinaka rocket launchers and medium range surface-to-air missiles (MR-SAMs). These new weapons systems have been designed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), with large private companies such as the Tata Group, Larsen & Toubro (L&T) and the Kalyani Group as production partners.

Each of these big manufacturers co-opted dozens of smaller firms to feed into the final production line.

Nibe has grown quickly and is seeking a leadership role in organising micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the industrial zones around Pune. “We have been appointed knowledge partners



**Defence parts maker Nibe is in talks with US small arms firm Sig Sauer for setting up a production line for supplying to the Indian Army**

PHOTO: NIBE

to the defence exposition (DefExpo) being organised by the Maharashtra government for MSMEs. The smaller production units do not confine themselves to manufacturing for one or two big firms. Instead, they feed into multiple production lines, maximising their output.

When L&T won the contract to build 100 K-9 Vajra self-propelled howitzers for the Indian Army, Nibe pitched to build the Vajra's hull and turret.

“Having begun as a Tier-2 company for L&T, we are in a position today to function as original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) for many technologies,” says Balakrishnan Swamy, chief technical officer of Nibe.

Encasing its close relationship with L&T, Nibe began fabricating large components for the modular bridges that are built by combat engineering units to cross canals and rivers on the

battlefield. The Swatantra bridge was developed by the DRDO's Pune-based laboratory, Research and Development (Engineers).

They gave L&T the production order and Nibe won an order that made it a feeder shop to L&T. “We do much of the contract manufacturing and heavy engineering fabrication for L&T. That is how we started our journey,” says Swamy

Meanwhile, the firm won a contract to build fuel storage tanks for Canada. The Nibe facility, inaugurated on Monday, is in discussion with US small arms (rifles, carbines and light machine guns) manufacturer, Sig Sauer, for setting up a production line for supplying to the Indian Army.

“We are dedicating 40,000 square feet of space to manufacturing Sig Sauer small arms, and another possible 20,000 square feet of mezzanine space. We have applied to the Ministry of Home Affairs for permission to assemble small arms and expect it to be granted soon,” says Swamy.