

AMETHI UNIT ALL SET TO MAKE AK-203 RIFLES

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AK-203 assault rifle.

The production of the AK-203 assault rifles by the Indo-Russian joint venture at Amethi, Uttar Pradesh, is set to begin by year-end and the manufacturing equipment required for it will be dispatched from Russia shortly, according to a senior official of Kalashnikov, the Russian company which manufactures the rifles.

The production was originally scheduled to begin early this year.

“Training of Indian workers of the factory will begin shortly and the manufacturing process will reach 100% indigenisation in three years,” the official who did not wish to be identified said.

He stated that earlier issues with regard to the ammunition for the rifles have been resolved.

Confirming this, Dmitry Shugaev, Director of the Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation (FSMTC) of Russia, said, “Work is under way to organise the production of the AK-203 assault rifles in India, the serial production of which is expected to begin in late 2022 or early 2023.”

Delayed due to war

As reported by *The Hindu* earlier, as part of pre-production activities, retrials were scheduled to be done with ammunition from the Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) in Russia in the first half of February, but got delayed by few months due to the war in Ukraine. On this, officials said this issue had now been resolved and a local manufacturer of ammunition had been identified in India.

As per the contract, over 6.1 lakh AK-203 assault rifles costing over Rs. 5,000 crore will be manufactured by a Joint Venture, Indo-Russian Rifles Private Ltd (IRRPL), at Korwa, Amethi in Uttar Pradesh. IRRPL was set up jointly between erstwhile OFB [now Advanced Weapons and Equipment India Limited (AWEIL) and Munitions India Limited (MIL)] of India and Rosoboronexport (RoE) and concern Kalashnikov of Russia.

A modern production line has been established and a small arms range has been set up where acceptance tests of rifles will be carried out. The full-scale production is expected to be reached within 2-3 years, Director-General of Rosobor on export Alexander Mikheev had stated earlier.

As per contractual terms, first 70,000 AK-203 rifles will be produced in India with a phased increase in the extent of localisation from 5% to 70%. The remaining rifles will be produced with 100% localisation.

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