

Whither self-reliance in defence hardware?



India's political establishment seems to have utterly failed to appreciate the need for self-sufficiency in military hardware. Consequently, no roadmap or grand strategy has ever been drawn up for attaining autonomy in defence production, writes Admiral Arun Prakash (retd).

In a clear declaration of his priorities, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had launched the laudable 'Make in India' campaign within weeks of election to office in 2014. Aimed at making India a "global design and manufacturing hub", the initiative targeted 25 sectors, with the triple objectives of creating jobs, increasing the growth rate of manufacturing and enhancing

the contribution of manufacturing to India's GDP. Over the past six years, apart from an initial spurt in FDI, the indicators in respect of all three stated objectives have disappointed.

Past elections have shown that, while the Indian voter may detest "policy paralysis", he is quite susceptible to being swayed by catchy and aspirational slogans.

Politicians, therefore, make liberal use of catch-phrases, not just for garnering votes, but also, as placebos to assuage the peoples' disappointment in other spheres. The time has come, for the Indian voter, to look beyond political sloganeering and ask why India's landscape is littered with so many stalled projects, and why planned developmental goals and objectives, are so rarely met.