

# A first: Def min moots public-pvt partnerships for 4 arms units

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**Bengaluru:** In a first, the defence ministry has proposed to bring four arms manufacturing units under the PPP (public-private-participation) model, in keeping with the central government's intent to increase private participation in the sector.

The proposal was mooted to various stakeholders at a meeting chaired by Ashok Kumar Gupta, secretary (defence production), on May 30, in presence of Ordnance Factory Board chairman S C Bajpai.

“While there were indications of privatisation in general, a member of the Niti

Aayog proposed that four small arms factories be converted into PPP units. This was seconded by the secretary (Gupta),” a source privy to the developments told **TOI**. More meetings are expected to be held with the general managers of the manufacturing units in the coming days, the source said.

The four units identified for the PPP model are Small Arms Factory (SAF) in Kanpur, Ordnance Factory Tiruchirappalli (OFT), Rifle Factory Ishapore (RFI) in Bengal and Ordnance Factory Korwa in UP. Sources, however, added that no private player had been identified yet. The four factories manufacture



Units in UP's Kanpur and Korwa, Tiruchirappalli in Tamil Nadu and Bengal's Ishapore have been identified for the PPP model

9mm carbines, 7.62mm rifles, light machine guns (5.56mm), rifles (5.56mm), artillery

guns and other infantry weapons alongside other items.

Some stakeholders are believed to be sceptical of the move. “They are already declaring many items produced by ordnance factories as non-core and allowing our customers (armed forces) to directly procure it from private players. With this (PPP model), even weapons will be in private hands,” said a source. The NDA government has so far declared 143 items “non-core” and asked ordnance factories to focus on core items.

The PPP proposal has already resulted in massive protest meetings organised by workers' unions at the four arms factories.