

'We still import 70% of our requirement'

DH NEWS SERVICE

BANGALORE: Defence Minister A K Antony on Monday rued that the country is still dependent on foreign vendors for 70 per cent of its defence requirements, despite claiming to have the world's fourth largest scientific community.

At the inaugural address of the Aero India 2009 International Seminar here, he said, "Though India is among the few nations that possess the capacity to develop, test, manufacture and operate aircraft, it is

still far behind in realising the dream of the first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, whose goal was to establish self-reliance in the defence sector.

"Our PSUs (Public Sector Units) are producing only 30 per cent of our needs. I feel sorry and sometimes even guilty when we see slow growth in self-reliance. This is not suitable for us. I don't visualise a day when we can have zero imports. But depending on other countries for 70 per cent of our defence needs is not acceptable. We are not

spending enough on research and development either. Only six per cent of our defence budget is spent on research and development," he lamented.

Speaking on the unconventional means of warfare used by terrorists in the 9/11 attacks and the 26/11 Mumbai carnage, the minister said such methods demand a calibrated international response.

"India's strategic location makes it imperative for us to maintain a credible military deterrent," he added.