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Hyderabad to Get Electronic Warfare Test Facility

BENGALURU: Defence Electronic Research Laboratory (DLRL), a DRDO facility in Hyderabad will soon have the country's first Electronic Warfare (EW) testing facility, including a test range. DRDO was considering Chitradurga in Karnataka for a such range, but the plan was shelved.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of an international conference on Electronic Warfare in Bengaluru on Tuesday, Scientific Advisor to the Defence Minister, G Satheesh Reddy, said the project to set up the EW test facility is being taken up on priority. The conference is organised by the Association of Old Crows (AOC), an international professional non-profit organisation specializing in EW, tactical information operations and associated disciplines with its headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia, USA.

The DRDO is working on the details and the test range is likely to come up in one year, Reddy said, adding that efforts are being made to reduce import of equipment in the area of EW by developing indigenous radars and other devices. "Development of indigenous seekers and radars is in highly advanced stage, probably we may not require import (of those equipments) in next few years," Reddy said.

President of AOC India Chapter U K Revankar said the proposed test facility will reduce time taken for testing and integration of EW equipment on airborne and naval platforms. "Currently, in the absence of such a facility, testing is done in labs using simulators. The test range will be of great help as equipment tested at the range will be fit for flying, he said.

Revankar, former Director of DARE (Defence Avionics Research Establishment), a DRDO lab in Bengaluru, said initially there was a proposal to have such a facility at Chitradurga, but it was dropped due to some problems. He did not elaborate on the reasons for the change.

The proposed range, he said, will require around five square km area that will have various equipment land and airborne equipment, all networked for real-time testing of equipment for identifying communication and radar threats that are important components in EW and taking appropriate action.

The four-day conference, attended by EW experts and 350 delegates, will discuss various issues, including future developments in the field at the global level.

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New range in AP to test DRDO's electronic warfare / EW devices

The Defence Research & Development Organisation is setting up a large field or outdoor test range for indigenous electronic warfare devices that later get fitted on war planes, ships and Army tanks.

The Hyderabad-based Defence Electronics Research Laboratory (DLRL) is tasked to work out its details within a year, according to G. Satheesh Reddy, defence scientist and Scientific Adviser to the Defence Minister.

"An EW test range is among the [national defence] priorities for the coming years," Dr. Reddy said on the sidelines of an annual EW conference here on Tuesday.

DLRL, it is learnt, has more or less identified Orvakal in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh for this facility. DRDO has already chosen the place for its 2700-acre National Open Air Range for testing missiles.

EW devices are now tested indoors in labs and are qualified for use in a year or two. An outdoor range will vastly cut this time, a DRDO veteran said.

EW devices broadly include radars, transmitters, antennas, sensors and communication devices – the Forces' "ears and eyes "for detecting enemy presence or deter its intelligence-gathering.

Dr. Reddy earlier said India had done reasonably well in EW; yet public and private manufacturers and research entities need to step up efforts in a fast changing global technology scene.

On the positive side, DLRL and the Defence Avionics Research Establishment in Bengaluru were in an advanced stage of developing indigenous seekers and AESA radars. Some of the EW areas may not require imports in the near future, he said.

A.K. Kalghatagi, Director (R&D) of co-host Bharat Electronics Ltd., said the EW devices market was globally estimated at $30 billion; and nationally at Rs. 30,000-40,000 crore.

Air Marshal P.P. Reddy, Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to the Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee, called for creating skilled personnel to support the sensitive systems.

Some 300 delegates are participating in the fourth EW conference organised by the India chapter of the Association of Old Crows and DRDO. AOC is a body of professionals engaged in military intelligence technologies.

Listing out a few EW essentials for gathering intelligence, Dr. Reddy said defence forces today need the latest transmitters, software defined or digital receivers, signal jammers, fast processing devices with optical and electromagnetic capability and accurately tracking antennas. The defence electronics labs need to develop W-band seeker applications, millimetre-wave based and tera-Hertz technologies to catch up with the world, he added.