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Soon After PM's Israel Visit, First Pvt Sector Anti-Tank Guided Missile Project Opened

By Shaurya Gurung

For years, the Indian Army has been in dire need of the new generation Anti-Tank Guided Missiles (ATGMs). It may have just got some relief as the first private sector plant to produce ATGMs was inaugurated here on Thursday.

Kalyani Rafael Advanced Systems (KRAS), a joint venture between Kalyani Strategic Systems Limited and Israel's Rafael Advanced Defence Systems, opened its facility in Hyderabad today. Under the joint venture, Rafael's SPICE air-to-surface missiles will also be manufactured. Top officials of the two companies explained that they are in discussion with the Indian Air Force for supplying the SPICE missiles. They also said that if the Indian armed forces require, the joint venture will also provide high-tech air defence systems such as the Iron Dome and David's Sling.

Although the joint venture was created in February, 2015, the opening of the manufacturing plant is significant because it comes close on the heels of PM Narendra Modi's visit to Israel last month. The Israeli Ambassador Daniel Carmon who was present at the event explained that joint defence development is a result of PM Modi's visit to Israel and this is being done by the joint venture.



India should co-produce stealth fighter with Russia, says panel

New Delhi: A high-powered panel appointed by the defence ministry to examine different aspects of the multi-billion dollar fifth generation fighter aircraft (FGFA) project has said India should co-develop and co-produce the stealth fighter with Russia, Indian Air Force sources said.

At a time when the IAF has serious reservations about the project, the committee, headed by Air Marshal Simhakutty Varthaman (retd), has strongly recommended India should go ahead with it, the sources said.

HT was the first to report on February 11 that the government had constituted a committee under the Air Marshal to assess viability of building the stealth fighter with Russia.

“We were given a task and we have submitted our report to the government. That’s all I can tell you,” Varthaman told HT, refusing to share the details of the report.

The committee has pointed out that India would significantly gain from partnering with Russia through the transfer of cutting-edge technology, sources said. The four-member panel looked into various aspects of the project for around five months.

India and Russia are yet to sign a research and development (R&D) contract for the FGFA. India has already spent ₹1,500 crore on the preliminary design stage (PDS) of the FGFA project. The PDS was completed in June 2013 on the basis of a contract inked with Russia.

India has a requirement for 120-130 such swing-role planes with stealth features for increased survivability, advanced avionics, smart weapons, top-end mission computers and 360-degree situational awareness.

‘Make In India’ yet to spur manufacturing, says panel

Parliamentary committee airs concerns over poor growth

The Parliament’s Standing Committee on Commerce has questioned the country’s low manufacturing growth despite initiatives such as Make In India, Startup India and FDI reforms that are now more than two years old.

The committee, led by BJP MP Bhupender Yadav, had expressed concerns about manufacturing growth averaging just 1.6% in the five years till 2015-16 and a 0.5% contraction in the sector in the first 9 months of FY17, in a report tabled in Parliament this March.

In an action taken report tabled in Parliament on Wednesday, the department of industrial policy and promotion (DIPP), under the ministry of commerce and industry, has listed out the several measures taken by the government to promote manufacturing and ease the business environment.

“Make in India initiative aims to make India a hub for manufacturing, design and innovation... Startup India initiative aims to build a strong ecosystem for nurturing innovation to drive sustainable economic growth and generate large scale employment opportunities,” the DIPP has said.

It further listed out various FDI policy changes to make India a investor-friendly destination, along with the focus on sprucing up physical infrastructure and easing the process of obtaining clearances for businesses.

While expressing appreciation for the measures enumerated by the government, the Committee stressed: “However, it will serve better to remember that most of these initiatives are now more than two years old and the manufacturing growth has not yet gone to the desired level.”

Urging the department to take effective steps to implement initiatives such as Make in India in a ‘more robust manner’, the committee has said all obstacles to the ‘optimal implementation’ of such programs must be removed in a time-bound manner.



Ill-equipped for battle

By PK Vasudeva

Shortage of ammunition, inefficiency and irregularities in procurement of modern defence equipment and also the neglect of the army is affecting the morale and battle-worthiness of the defence forces. This should be the highest priority of the government, specifically to make its army strong like Israel if it desires to make India free from enemy hostilities

The report by the Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG), which highlights a serious shortage of ammunition in the Indian Army, has caused considerable concern and raised questions about the preparedness of the armed forces to fight a war. An earlier CAG report had mentioned the poor state of ammunition management in the army for the period 2008-13. The latest report is a follow-up audit and it has not noted any significant improvement in the availability and quality of ammunition supplied by the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) to the forces. The CAG has stated that the army faces a shortfall of 40 per cent.

This would mean that 61 out of 152 types of ammunition available were meant for less than 10 days of fighting a war, whereas the army is supposed to hold stocks of ammunition for 40 days of an intense war.

The shortage of artillery and tank ammunition is very serious and critical, as 83 per cent of this high calibre ammunition might turn out to be useless because of the dearth of “fuses” which are essential components of

