

## **DRDO to develop module for reducing stress in armed forces**

*By Hemant Kumar Rout*

Bhubaneswar: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is working on a model to break monotony and reduce stress and depression that are largely affecting the armed forces deployed at very remote and extreme conditions. The Defence Institute of High Altitude Research (DIHAR) is developing aeroponic-based modules that include indoor farming which would not only help to enhance agro productivity but also relieve stress among defence personnel.

“We have started researching on certain innovative interventions that will provide us inputs on the mood performances of armed forces in remote locations. Basically, we want to see the effect of indoor farming on the mood of soldiers in isolated posts. If the module works, it will be a great achievement for stress management,” said a scientist involved in the project.

DIHAR is a research wing of DRDO, which aims at evolving novel inputs, with focused R&D in cold arid agro-animal technologies for enhancing agro-animal productivity and availability of fresh foods for troops in Ladakh, the most difficult terrain of the world.

The defence personnel are exposed to various kinds of stress due to their unique nature of duties and services for which they are forced to stay away from family for long periods being in life-threatening combat situations and extreme weather conditions.

Stress, anxiety and depression lead to a number of suicides in the armed forces every year. Official reports said as many as 101 soldiers, 19 airmen and five sailors had committed suicide last year, while three cases of fratricide were reported from the three services.

Aeroponics is the process of growing plants in an air or mist environment without the use of soil or an aggregate medium. The basic principle of aeroponic growing is to grow plants suspended in a closed or semi-closed environment by spraying the plant’s dangling roots and lower stem with an atomized or sprayed, nutrient-rich water solution.

“We are working on to find out some ways where we can break the monotony and improve the quality of life. Apart from the armed forces, the aged population will also get benefit of the aeroponics and indoor farming. Monotony is also abundantly found in geriatric population and people who are in long term medication,” the scientist said.

Citing the ‘Use it or lose it’ theory, the scientist said unless and until a person uses his brain, he will be losing and once that person starts losing, he will be entering into depression. “That needs to be checked at any cost for a healthy life,” he added.