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## High-altitude trials of indigenous gun

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PUNE: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is all set to carry out high altitude (HA) trial of 155 mm 52-calibre advanced towed artillery gun system (ATAGS) in Sikkim next week. ATAGS has been jointly developed by DRDO and the private sector. In September last year, it successfully cleared the desert trials.

A senior DRDO official told TOI on Wednesday, "We will carry out HA trial next week in Sikkim. A team of scientists from Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE) and the army team will carry out the trial together. The duration of trial is not yet fixed but it generally goes on for a few weeks."

DRDO had carried out deserts trials in Rajasthan in September last year and its scientists claimed that the trials achieved the desired results. In fact, ATAGS set a record during desert trials, firing shells to a range of 48km, against the army's requirement of 40 km, the DRDO sources informed.

"The HA trial is crucial and tough as the gun will have to perform in different weather and geographical conditions. During the trial, a large number of extended range full bore artillery ammunition will be fired from the gun," a senior DRDO official told TOI over phone from New Delhi on Wednesday.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) had sanctioned the ATAGS project in September 2012 and DRDO, in collaboration with Bharat Forge and Tata Power, has developed two prototypes of ATAGS. These prototypes underwent maiden structural stability trials in December 2016 at Proof and Experimental Establishment, a government test facility at Balasore in Odisha, the sources added.

After completing all the trials, the army will conduct its own trials and analyse each result. "If the army has a doubt on a particular aspect, it will be again revisited and corrected," the sources added.

ATAGS has an all-electric drive, an advantage over traditional hydraulic drives which exist in other towed guns. The electric drives of ATAGS helps in handling ammunition, opening and closing the breech mechanism and ramming the round into firing chamber. The gun is expected to be inducted into the Indian Army by 2020, DRDO sources said.

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