

To up efficiency, Centre gives DRDO more financial powers

By Rajat Pandit

Highlights

- Officials said the delegation of financial powers to DRDO was “intended to neutralise the ill-effects of over centralisation”
- India continues to wallow in the strategically-vulnerable and embarrassing position of being the world’s largest arms importer due to the abysmal performance of DRDO

New Delhi: The government on Wednesday delegated greater financial powers to Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) to “enhance its efficiency and effectiveness”, but the body requires a drastic overhaul rather than just mere tinkering to ensure India develops a robust defence-industrial base in the years ahead. Soon after coming to office in 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had asked DRDO to jettison its “Chalta Hai” (lackadaisical) attitude, and become pro-active in delivering advanced defence technologies to the armed forces without huge time and cost overruns. A few months down the line, the government had sacked the then DRDO chief, missile scientist Avinash Chander, and then bifurcated the post of scientific advisor to the defence minister-cum-DRDO chief, which was held by one person till then. But since then, concrete systemic reforms have been largely missing in action. India continuing to wallow in the strategically-

vulnerable and embarrassing position of being the world’s largest arms importer due to the abysmal performance of DRDO and its 52 labs, four defence shipyards, five defence PSUs and 41 ordnance factories.

Officials on Tuesday said the delegation of financial powers to DRDO, a decision taken by defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman, is “intended to neutralize the ill-effects of over centralization and facilitate quicker decision-making” in the organisation.

DRDO: MORE MISSES THAN HITS

2018-19 budget ₹ 22,204 cr

Over ₹2.65 lakh crore worth of products inducted/under-induction into military

Nuclear (Agni series) missile programme relatively successful

But most projects hit by huge time & cost overruns

52 labs with 7,500 scientists (total manpower around 24,500)

Some important projects

<p>Arjun Sanctioned in 1974, Army has inducted 124 Mark-I tanks. But Mark-II, with 73 upgrades, yet to be inducted</p> <p>Ballistic Missile Defence Development of two-tier BMD system began in late-1990s but not yet operational</p> <p>Ghatak Project of stealth combat drones, with initial Rs 2,650 crore, years away from completion</p>	<p>Tejas Fighter Sanctioned in 1983, fighter yet to get final operational clearance. Only 9 of 40 initial jets produced. Delivery of 83 Mark-1A fighters will begin by 2022-2023. Mark-II still on drawing board</p> <p>Nirbhay Nuclear land-attack cruise missile, with strike range of 1,000-km, tested successfully last year after failures since 2013</p>	<p>Submarines Only 1 nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN), INS Arihant, with 750-km range missiles, inducted. At least 4 SSBNs, with 3,500-km to over 5,000-km missiles, required</p> <p>AWACS Two airborne warning and control systems aircraft, approved in 2015 for Rs 5,113-crore, will be ready only by 2024-2025</p>
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The move comes at a time when the government is yet to appoint a successor to S Christopher, who retired as the DRDO chief last month, with defence secretary Sanjay Mitra holding the additional charge of the organization. “A top-level search committee, chaired by the cabinet secretary P K Sinha, will select the next DRDO chief within the next two-three months,” said an official.

The powers of the DRDO chief (secretary, defence R&D) to sanction projects and procurements have now been enhanced from Rs 75 crore to Rs 150 crore. The powers of the seven directors-general or DRDO cluster heads (aeronautics, missiles & strategic systems, electronics, armaments, life sciences, naval systems and computational & cyber systems), in turn, have gone up from Rs 50 crore to 75 crore. "Many powers connected to sanctioning of projects and procurements as well as day-to-day functioning have now been decentralized," said another official.

But clearly much more needs to be done. The Rama Rao Committee (RRC), way back in 2008, for instance, had held that DRDO should focus only on 8 to 10 "critical technologies" of "strategic importance" instead of making everything from dental implants and mosquito repellents to nuclear missiles and fighter jets.

Top Comment

Even if you give 20% funds for research to DRDO they will do nothing....its a rotten system which doesn't improve...other than copying technologies across the globe what has DRDO contributed?

But many of its recommendations are yet to be properly implemented on the ground. The DRDO budget, for instance, continues to hover around 5-6% of the overall defence budget, when China spends around 20% of its defence outlay on R&D, say scientists. "If salaries and other revenue expenditure are taken out, the actual amount for defence R&D is quite paltry at just about Rs 9,000 crore, of which around Rs 5,000 crore is for strategic systems. DRDO needs at least Rs 5,000-6,000 crore more for R&D," said an official.



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DRDO gets more financial powers

Continuing with its drive to give more financial powers to senior officials, the Defence Ministry on Wednesday enhanced the sanction authority of various heads of crucial Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). Earlier, the financial powers of Vice-Chiefs of three Services were enhanced to reduce time taken in decision making and sustain modernisation drive besides operational efficiency.

As regards DRDO, Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman delegated more powers to Secretary, Defence R&D to sanction projects, procurements and enhanced his powers from Rs 75 crore to Rs 150 Crore and for the Directors General (DG) it was increased from Rs 50 crore to Rs 75 crore. Similarly, for Proprietary Article Certificate (PAC) cases were increased from Rs 50 crore to Rs 150 Crore for Secretary Defence (R&D), officials said.

The powers of Director General (DG) have been enhanced from Rs 3 crore to Rs 5 crore for sanctioning research projects to Universities, Technological Institutions and to Indigenous Defence Industry under the Technology Development Fund Scheme of DRDO.

The Director Generals of DRDO has expressed their satisfaction at this major initiative by the Government and have opined that these forward-looking measures would ensure that majority of the decisions relating to implementation and functioning would largely be taken within the technology clusters whereas policy issues would primarily come to the Government. Given the geographically dispersed clusters and laboratories, this will greatly reduce file movements to and from the DRDO Headquarters, New Delhi and facilitate faster decision-making.

DRDO's unique surveillance system to guard border at high altitude

By Hemant Kumar Rout

The border surveillance system designed and developed by Dehradun-based Instruments Research and Development Establishment has many unique features for monitoring border areas at high altitude.

BHUBANESWAR: Surveillance along the border, which has been a concern for the security forces, can now be intensified with a new system developed by India's premier Research and Development agency - Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). The border surveillance system designed and developed by Dehradun-based Instruments Research and Development Establishment (IRDE) has many unique features for monitoring border areas at high altitude.

The system facilitates monitoring and surveillance of border areas by automatically detecting intrusion. It helps ease patrolling in harsh zero temperature areas and providing the armed forces the much-needed relief.

A defence official said after successful trials, the system was deployed along the border in Leh and Ladakh region on a pilot basis. It has now been upgraded and made robust to deliver desired results. It will be deployed at high altitudes for day and night all-weather surveillance, he said.

The system consists of electro-optic payload along with a radar powered by hybrid energy source and a control station for remote surveillance. It can cover unmanned installation with 20 km remote operation capability. Powered through hybrid power source and equipped with advanced image processing feature for hassle-free surveillance, the system is open for networking.

It meets all parameters of armed forces during all weather conditions. "All weather surveillance units have been developed first time for unmanned posts with 20 km remote operation capability. It provides electronic surveillance solution for high altitude border areas exposed to sub-zero temperature," the official informed.

The tracking system can be stored at 55 degree Celsius to minus 40 degree and can operate at 55 degree Celsius to minus 30 degree. It can relay the real-time video and data at a distance of 20 km to control station through wireless and fiber optic link. It consists of battlefield surveillance radar and electro-optics payload mounted on the pan-tilt unit kept at the observation tower.

The payload has thermal and day camera, eye-safe laser rangefinder and medium wave infrared thermal imagers, global positioning system and digital magnetic compass. "Integrated with de-icing and de-fogging module and security camera, it can record activities for 14 days on site. The best feature is it can change detection. A successful border surveillance mechanism can deter and control illegal immigration, smuggling and trafficking besides intrusion," the official added.

<http://www.newindianexpress.com/states/odisha/2018/jun/28/drdo-unique-surveillance-system-to-guard-border-at-high-altitude-1834763.html>