

Tessy Thomas elevated as D-G Aero of DRDO

Tessy Thomas, Director of the Advanced Systems Laboratory, Hyderabad, has been elevated to the post of Director-General, Aeronautical Systems (DG-Aero) of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). The missile scientist, who shot to fame as *Agni Putri* with the successful launch of Agni IV in 2011, will move to Bengaluru and take charge on June 1. She will succeed CP Ramnarayan, who will retire at the end of this month. "I am happy at the new responsibility given to me by the DRDO and am confident of handling the challenges. It's all a part of life," said Tessy Thomas reacting to her appointment today. A B.Tech from Thrissur, Tessy did a Master's in guided missile technology from the Institute of Armament Technology, Pune, and doctorate in guidance systems, which are important areas in the aerospace science and industry.

Tessy has been fast progressing in her career since she became the first woman to lead a missile project with the Agni II Prime project, whose first test failed in 2010. However, she led Agni IV to successful test launch the following year. The nuclear capable, long range ballistic missile with a range of over 4,000 kms has since gone through a total of five tests and is on its way to being inducted into the Defence forces. The 55-year-old Tessy Thomas was made the Director of ASL in July 2014. She was one of the first few women to be appointed directors of the DRDO, which has a string of about 50 national laboratories. A few years ago, the DRDO had in a major restructure created about eight posts of Director-General with different clusters of responsibility in technical areas and another four in corporate functions.

Women power in DRDO

The first woman scientist to be made D-G of the technical cluster of electronics and communications was J Manjula in 2015. Tessy will be the fifth woman D-G in the DRDO establishment where more women are reaching the top positions. Shashibala Singh, Chitra Rajagopal, Hina Gokhale are the other three who already hold the D-G position with different portfolios. The Aero cluster labs that will be under Tessy Thomas command include: the Defence Avionics Research Establishment, Gas Turbine Research Establishment, Centre For Air Borne System, Aeronautical Development Establishment, Centre for Military Airworthiness & Certification and Agra-based Aerial Delivery Research and Development Establishment, according to the DRDO.

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