



G SATEESH REDDY
 DRDO CHIEF

We will offer technologies to private sector for early realisation of products and to support R&D works

In 5 Years, We Aim to be Self-reliant in Missiles, Radars and Armaments

The private industry is vital for self-reliance, says DRDO chief G Sateesh Reddy while inviting companies as development and production partners. In an interview to **Manu Pubby**, the missile scientist says the next generation AMCA (advanced multi-role combat aircraft) can fly within five years of approval and shares his formula for roping in industry for import substitution. Excerpts:

How does DRDO see the push for the private sector?

DRDO is a technology development organisation and all our technologies have been realised into products by various PSUs and industry. DRDO has set a target to achieve self-reliance in missiles, radars, sonars, torpedoes, armaments and EW (early warning) systems. We intend to have no import for these systems in five years. We will offer our technologies to industries for early realisation of products and to support R&D facilities. Our focus will also be to support start-ups through the Technology Development Fund (TDF). Time and cost management of projects involving industry is another priority area. We have come up with a policy for identification of a Development Cum Production Partner (DcPP) in which the industry will be involved in all stages of system development.

How is the progress of the Light Combat Aircraft and AMCA projects?

An advanced version, the LCA MK II, is the next aero platform. LCA MK II configuration is frozen and qualitative requirements are finalised. It is our



PVT SECTOR
 We are identifying companies in the private sector that can take on the role of lead system integrator for major systems

THE BIG PROJECT

Presently, DRDO's flagship programme is to develop an advanced medium combat aircraft

endeavor to develop the fifth-generation advanced multi-role combat aircraft (AMCA) as per the project schedule to meet the Air Force's requirements. We should be in a position to roll out the first AMCA within five years of project approval. We are not comparing AMCA with other aircraft, but are trying to meet the specifications given to us by IAF.

Is development of an indigenous fighter jet engine a priority?

Yes, it's a priority for strategic autonomy. The development of an indigenous jet engine through the

Kaveri programme has boosted the know-how and industrial ecosystem in the country. Presently, we are working on the flagship programme to develop an Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft. It requires an advanced 110kN thrust class engine. We will involve academia, industry and defence PSUs to develop this high-thrust engine. We are open to international collaboration.

What's your plan on outsourcing further to private industry?

The private sector has been playing a great role in the production of DRDO

products. When Dr (former President APJ Abdul) Kalam started work, there were barely 30 partner companies, but now we have more than 1,800. A number of industries started as fabricators for us and have now become established aerospace manufacturers with our technology, handholding and quality practices. Actually, the aerospace industry developed by us is our strength. The Akash air defence system, for example, is built 87% by the industry. We have thrown open our test facilities to the industry. We will help with technology for development of products. We are identifying companies in the private sector that can take on the role of lead system integrator for major systems.

Can you share updates on systems like the BMD, Astra and others?

We have developed a number of variants of anti-tank missiles. User trials of NAG ATGM have been successfully conducted and development trials of Helina, the airborne anti-tank missile are under progress. We are currently working on MPATGM (man-portable anti-tank guided missile) programme. Five demonstration trials have already been completed and we would be able to offer it for user trials soon. India is one of the few countries that has an active and successful BMD (Ballistic Missile Defence) programme. We have demonstrated our BMD capability through both simulation as well as live target engagements in both endo and exo regions. All essential technologies have been proven through tests.

Carrier trials for LCA-Naval

THE NAVAL VARIANT of the DRDO's Light Combat Aircraft has rushed through an incredible set of milestones this year.

In August, the aircraft being developed by the DRDO's Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) began an intensive series of trial at the Shore-Based Test Facility (SBTF), a mock aircraft carrier at the INS Hansa, Dabolim.

The jet has completed 26 landings and take-offs from the ski-jump including its first-ever night-time arrested landing on November 13. Now comes news that prototypes of the fighter are set to fly from the Navy's aircraft carrier, INS Vikramaditya,



Prototypes of the Naval Light Combat Aircraft.

sometime before December 31. The Navy has constituted a review board to see exactly when the carrier can be made available for the trials.

Project officials say the trials, if approved by the Navy board, could last for upto a month, from mid-December 2019 to mid-January 2020.