

DRDO – India’s victory force, making history in Parliament

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I was always critical of the DRDO, like the other less informed people and some media persons — calling it a ‘white elephant’ or a burden on India’s defence establishment, which never delivers on time and never convinces the forces. It was in March this year, when as a member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence, I visited DRDO’s action fields and, with the other MPs, had a lengthy interaction with the scientists and officers of the establishment.

We saw their labs and heard how in difficult circumstances and despite lethal Budget cuts they have performed brilliantly. Their achievements have surprised the developed world. DRDO’s excellent record in manufacturing, improvising and equipping all the three wings of our forces has been exemplary. Yet, due to reasons, that either our so-called defence expert media persons remain ill-informed about or the foreign lobbyists work overtime to create an embarrassingly low opinion about our own scientists, the DRDO was never considered for appreciation or praised for the efforts it made and the results it has shown.

Seeing the excellent performance and highly successful achievements of the DRDO, left me with a sense of guilt and regret. It was a moment of a revelation for us all, and immediately I proposed to the Raksha Mantri Shri Manohar Parrikar if he would consider holding an exhibition of the DRDO’s superb achievements at the Parliament House? The move would not just provide our lawmakers the opportunity to see the developments of the DRDO, but also help attract positive attention of the media. It’s easy to deride our own scientists and make fun of their hardwork while praising whatever happens in the west. This attitude not only demoralises our forces, but it also adversely impacts India’s future defence plans. This as the planners and financiers to R&D feel less enthusiastic about increasing the budget allocations for the organisation. Eventually, India becomes more and more dependent on foreign purchases.

Fortunately, Manohar Parrikar took less than thirty seconds to okay the proposal and the files began moving. We tried to hold this exhibition in the last Budget session, but logistically it didn’t work. When the exhibition finally opens on August 3, by Lok Sabha Speaker Smt Sumitra Mahajan, I feel it will be a glorious moment for the defence establishment, especially for the technologists and the scientists who have put in their best to strengthen India’s defence sinews.

Tejas, recently inducted into the Indian Air Force is one shining example. Its hundred per cent indigenously developed light-weight, multi-role single engine tactical fighter which can carry air to air,

air to ground and anti-ship missiles. Its a wonder-bird of the Indian Air Force and the latest icon of pride, thanks to the DRDO.

PINAKA weapon system is another feather in the DRDO's cap. Its a indigenously developed multi-barrel Rocket Launcher for twelve rockets in two pods that can be fired simultaneously. It's one of the most lethal machines for the enemy, successfully developed and delivered.

The story of main battle tank Arjun mark II reads like an adventure novel. Too many hurdles, too many doubts finally resulted in the mark II, which today boasts of the state-of-the-art technology incorporated into it. To cite a few – it has many progressions, including 15 significant profile enhancements. It has a combat weight of 62 tonnes (fully loaded and can move at 60 km/hour on road and 40 km/horu cross country with 1400 horsepower engine. With a smart rate of firepower 6 to 8 rounds per minute, its potency is boosted with missiles automatic target tracking and maximised penetration characteristics. Its equipped with advanced land navigation system and enhanced night vision capabilities. And every part and technology is Indian!!

DRDO touches the everyday life of a soldier and the citizen alike – from Leh berry to ready-to-eat chapatis, min battle tank to BRAHMOS and the Varunastra torpedo, that can destroy a submarine with a hit-range of 20km within deep waters.

Besides developing state-of-the-art radar systems for battlefield surveillance, 3D low-level light-weight radar, maritime patrol airborne radar, DRDO has developed and inducted Troop-Level radar for Akash weapon system which is the air defence system for the Indian army. It has the capability to perform extensive search, track multiple targets and missiles and to command and guide own multiple missiles concurrently.

Agni, Prithvi, Pinaka, missiles are the icons of our defence forces' muscles and brains. And all credit for them goes to the DRDO. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Make in India' is in fact getting flowered best in DRDO, thanks to Parrikar's visionary support.

The DRDO prowess at show inside the Parliament is a historical event. It's for the MPs to take full advantage of it and spread the message of Indian talent and scientific achievements, rising above the party lines. If they don't see it, they will know less about India and will remain incapable to contribute to the defence preparedness of the nation.

It's a must, a compulsory visit for, I would even say, anyone who is anywhere and is interested in indian future, he or she must take a ticket to Delhi, contact the local MP to enter Parliament House and see this fabulous show of India's might before August 5, when the exhibition closes.