

DRDO: Achievements and Way Ahead

“The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago, the next best time is today”, this ancient Chinese proverb duly captures the essence of taking the right action at the right time. The far sighted vision of the founding fathers of a nation is vital for its existence, surviving the tides of time. Sixty years ago, a tree was planted whose fruits have nourished the inhabitants of this land for all these long years. DRDO is arguably one of the unsung pillars of the Indian sovereignty which has constantly provided its unanimous support to the nation. Today when we look back at our achievements, the onus is on us to ensure that the way ahead for this elite research organization is smoother than it has ever been.

To make an effort to try compiling all the achievements of DRDO in the space of a few limited words is an injustice to the gigantic stature of the achievements made by the organization in these sixty glorious years. Yet there have been certain highlights in the innovations, inventions, and developments that stole away the limelight. From the very beginning, DRDO has worked on the ideals of self-reliance. The belief of making India self-sufficeint in the sectors of defence and research was one of the core values on which the foundation stone of DRDO was laid upon. Today when the the Prime Minister is promoting programmes like the ‘Make In India’ initiative, the timings cannot be more appropriate to marvel at the example of DRDO. The organization has long been associated with the indigenious pride that comes attached when a homegrown project gets successful- much like that sapling you planted in your backyard twenty years ago which is now providing you with its immense shade.

It is extremely difficult to pinpoint the most successful project by DRDO when Agni, Prithvi, Tejas, Arihant, BrahMos and many such projects have now become household names. As a country with ‘not so friendly’ relations with its immediate neighbors, a strong defence base was more than a necessity. Hence, it is not surprising to observe a controlled publicity of the successful projects. And why should it not be- if you have it, flaunt it. This phrase is often quoted in the defence circles, “Defence is more telling than doing”. This resonates with the need to keep developing weapons, keep improving internal security measure, keep investing in

newer technologies with a hope that a situation never arises when there comes a need to exploit these valued ventures.

It would be unjust to assume DRDO as an organization that solely focusses on developments of weapons, missiles, aircrafts and submarines, as is the common knowledge of many. DRDO is one of the most diversified research organizations with its footprints over aeronautics, armaments, electronics, land combat engineering, life sciences, materials, missiles, and naval systems. With over 5000 scientists employed in its total workforce of 30000, DRDO boasts a remarkable strength for any such organization worldwide. Not just in numbers, the stellar achievements of the organization in the past 60 years have repeatedly reminded the nation that what a good decision planting that tree was.

Looking at the achievements, one cannot overlook Tejas, the light weight fighter jet. Being one of the costliest projects ever, this ambitious aircraft gives India an upper hand in case of conflicts with its neighbours. The BrahMos missile, in association with Russia, is one another feather in the cap which keeps our archenemies alert and also aware of the fact that there is a dire need to keep pace with India's developments. INS Arihant, India's first indigenously designed and built nuclear submarine, granted India a place in the elite club of countries that have achieved this feat. In the times when there are predictions that the future aerial combat would be dominated by drones controlled by pilots stationed at a safe haven, DRDO came up with Rustom, a Medium Altitude Long Endurance unmanned combat air vehicle (UCAV). In the land combat vehicles, Arjun has made its mark to signal a red for those eyeing Indian borders through the land. The newer updated variant of Arjun comes with improvements in missile technologies and speed. These are relatively new success stories- the culmination of a long story that began with Agni and Prithvi among others and hundreds of other projects before that, each helping to strengthen the defence base of our vast vulnerable country.

The achievements can be credited to a number of factors- the constant support from the government of autonomy, the faith of the policymakers in the scientists, the resolute determination of the employees of this elite organization in their work and the tapping of the best scientific brains, incubating them in the ideal environment and acknowledgement to the success, which latently serves as a boost of motivation

for the scientists to keep innovating, despite occasional failures and setbacks. The way ahead is exciting. With a motto, "Strength's Origin is in Science", the spirit of enthusiasm is using science for the country's well being is an interesting idea for the scientists who work day and night.

With the threats increasing everyday and enemies and allies making leaps in technological advancements, we live in the times when a day's rest would make us much behind in this race. DRDO has acknowledged this fact, which is visible in the upcoming projects lined up for the future. The thirst for development becomes more prominent when it also becomes a need, as is the case with India. DRDO is one such few organization which is entrusted with safeguarding the citizens of India through its scientific developments and research. The success of DRDO in fostering healthy partnerships with organizations of its kinds in other countries in assisting it with the development of new better technologies provides a light of hope. Together, by cooperation, it is always easier to tackle the obstructions in the road ahead because we are not just fighting with each other, but also with the common enemies like terrorism. DRDO is also an indication of Indian soft power and its establishment as an undisputable regional superpower in South Asia. The military and weaponry display in front of the esteemed guests and the whole world makes every Indian happy with pride. It is that smile of assurance that DRDO brings in the life of common men of India. It is that smile of relaxation that DRDO brings in the life of common men when there is a news of worry. With DRDO taking the helm of nation's security supplemented with these glorious sixty years, the common man of India can still manage his relaxed sleep and feels the gratitude towards this elite organization.

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