

The missile man

DRDO fellow D.S. Reddy has been conferred with a LifeTime Achievement Award.

India made history when the country's first Ballistic Missile, Prithvi, was successfully tested in 1988. It meant that India had finally taken the first step towards becoming self-sufficient in producing wide-range ballistic missiles. On March 25, a scientist who played a vital role in development and flight evaluation for the project and a Defence Research and Development Organisation Fellow, D. Sreenivasulu Reddy of Hyderabad, was conferred with a Lifetime Achievement Award for four decades of his contribution to the organisation by the Defence Minister, Arun Jaitley. He was also instrumental in the successful flight test of the ship-launched Dhanush missile.

"I'm honoured that the organisation decided to confer this rare award to me," says 68-year-old D.S Reddy, recalling that the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (the umbrella programme which included the Prithvi project), would have been nothing without Dr Abdul Kalam.

"He initiated the programme in 1983 and I joined DRDO in 1973. Before Dr Kalam joined us, we had no great expectations. The vision and leadership was missing and we didn't know what we were capable of. He turned it all around. I interacted with him for the first time when I was being interviewed for a promotion and Dr Kalam said I did well. I also felt gratified when he asked my teammates, 'Can you launch this missile without Mr Reddy?' indicating that my work was valued."

In the 43 years of his service in the field, he has also been conferred with the Agni Award for Excellence and the Self-Reliance and the DRDO Performance Excellence Award. He says that he got into this field by chance. "I had completed my MSc and in the '70s, finding a job was very tough. I saw an advertisement in a newspaper that said DRDO was hiring. I didn't know much about it, but I applied. That was my first and last job, and I didn't think of quitting because the work environment was excellent. Superiors would give us freedom and help us out if we got stuck," he says, stressing that the Ballistic Missile Programme is important to defend ourselves. "Developing and under-developed countries are not allowed to import missiles but our adversaries have got them through clandestine means. It is all the more necessary now to be ready to defend ourselves," he says and adds that he is grateful for his family's support. "I would hardly be able to spend time with the kids, but they understood the importance of my job," he says.



Tue, 28 Mar, 2017

IAF's 2nd base for radar planes ready for take-off in Bathinda

By Vijay Mohan

DRDO has built support base for the facility developed at Bhisiana station

The Indian Air Force's second airbase for operating airborne early warning and control systems (AEW&CS) aircraft that has come up at the Bhisiana Air Force Station near Bathinda in Punjab is ready for operations.

The infrastructural and support facilities built up at the airbase by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) for the AEW&CS are complete and the new complex within the airbase is expected to be handed over to the Air Force next month, IAF sources said.

The base will house indigenous AEW&CS developed by the DRDO, which is christened Netra and was showcased at the Republic Day Parade as well as the Aero India show earlier this year. A fighter, unmanned aerial vehicle and a missile squadron are also based at Bhisiana. The other IAF base to operate AEW&CS is Agra, home to the A-50 AWACS, which are Israeli Phalcon systems integrated with a modified Russian IL-76 heavy-lift aircraft.

The DRDO's Bengaluru-based Centre for Airborne Systems (CABS) has developed three such systems that are mounted on the Brazilian Embraer ERJ 145 aircraft. Two of the aircraft would be based at Bhisiana while the third will remain positioned at the CABS for research and development, sources said.

Another six such systems are reported to have been ordered, with the IAF's total requirement in this category projected at 20 platforms.

AWACS are force multipliers and can cover a huge swath of airspace, look deep into the enemy territory and detect enemy aircraft and missiles right from the launch phase, besides intercepting communication signals. Their flying altitude gives them an advantage over ground-based radar and they can provide a real time battlefield picture to commanders for decision making and counter air operations.

At present, the IAF has three A-50s with another two in the pipeline. The DRDO has also launched a new project to build larger and more capable AWACS than the Netra. Initially, two such AWACS aircraft will be developed, with four more to follow subsequently. The IAF is also looking at western platforms like the Boeing 767 and Airbus 330 for future planes. China and Pakistan also operate different types of AEW&CS.