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Defence PSUs, ordnance factories are in dire need of overhaul

As is the case with the DRDO, many of the other DPSUs are engaged in producing non-defence items

By Dinesh Kumar

Chandigarh: India's nine Defence Public Sector Units (DPSUs) and 41 Ordnance Factories (OF) are in need of a serious review, overhaul and some serious and meaningful accountability. This is paramount if India has to achieve a credible level of self-reliance in defence equipment. The problems are myriad. These state-owned DPSUs and OFs hardly invest in research and development (R&D). They need sufficient resources to undertake upgrading, modernisation and expansion, but not without putting serious accountability systems into place. They have been suffering serious capacity under-utilisation, are in need of greater financial autonomy, as well as more autonomy in decision making such as in matters relating to joint ventures, co-development and co-production with foreign countries.

As is the case with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), many of the other DPSUs are similarly engaged in producing non-defence items, which has resulted in dilution of their status and character as DPSUs. For example, Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML) is heavily into making rolling stock such as wagons and coaches for Railways, earth moving equipment and engaging in mining construction business, with defence accounting for less than 50%. About 20% of products manufactured by Bharat Electricals Limited (BEL), which is otherwise entrusted in manufacturing radars, sonars, electronic warfare, communication and other sensor equipment, comprise several major non-defence items such as, for example, electronic voting machines and studio equipment.

The Mishra Dhatu Nigam Limited (MIDHANI), established in collaboration with a French and German firm to achieve self-reliance in strategic materials such as special steels, super alloys and titanium alloys for the defence, nuclear and space sectors, has hardly undergone any worthwhile modernisation and remains saddled with outdated and obsolete facilities, and is thus fraught with jeopardizing strategic products. The impact is evident as it is unable to make even the much needed lightweight bullet-proof jackets for the Army and the paramilitary forces. Instead, these are mostly being imported. Bharat Dynamics Limited, which makes various types of short range missiles, has a poor track of completing new projects.

The four shipyards comprising the nine DPSUs need major restructuring and integration in order to synergise their resources, the lack of which is hindering modernisation of the existing facilities and also in optimizing utilisation of human resources and production capacity. It is no wonder that none of the shipyards have been able to obtain a major export contract. Rather India's defence shipyards remained under-utilised during much of the 1990s and even a part of this century. And when tasked, they take far too long to construct ships for which the Navy too has to share the blame. Moreover, the shipyards hardly engage in R&D, forcing them to be therefore dependent either on designs supplied by vendors or on designs that are vintage.

One example pertaining to the GRSE's (Garden Reach Shipyards and Engineering Limited) poor track record should suffice. In March 2003, the government sanctioned construction of four anti-submarine warfare Corvettes. Construction of the four warships were to begin in 2004, 2005, 2007 and 2008, respectively, and to be delivered within four years each in 2008, 2009, 2011 and 2012. Instead a series of delays led to an almost three-fold cost escalation from an originally projected Rs 3,000 crore to over Rs 8,000 crore. Eventually, construction on the first ship (INS Kamurta) began in 2006 and was delivered eight years and two months later in July 2014; the second (INS Kadmatt) eight years and seven months later in November 2015; the third (INS Kiltan) a staggering nine years and seven months later in October 2017 and the fourth (INS Kavaratti) also after over nine years later in 2018. It did not help that the Navy made 1,200 design changes during the course of construction of these ships.

India's premier naval shipyard, the Mazagon Docks Limited (MDL), has a similarly poor record of maintaining deadlines. For example, there were inordinate delays in the delivery of the three 7,400-tonne Kolkata class stealth Destroyers. Delivery of these warships was originally scheduled for 2008, 2009 and 2010. The delivery schedule was first revised to May 2010, May 2011 and May 2012; then further revised to March of 2012, 2013 and 2014, only to be eventually completed in July 2014 (INS Kolkata), followed by in September 2015 (INS Kochi) and November 2016 (INS Chennai) at a 225% escalated cost of Rs 11,662 crore, from the originally estimated Rs 3,800 crore. The delays were on account of multiple problems which included a staggering 2,363 design modifications by the Navy to incorporate new weapon systems and sensors, slow construction procedures, technical problems, Ukraine's failure to deliver the ship's propellers and shafts, resulting in the contract being later awarded to a Russian firm and finally the delay in the delivery of the Israeli Barak-8 anti-air missiles.

While the Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) and the GRSE can only build small and medium size ships, India effectively has only one shipyard, the MDL, with the capacity to build large size warships such as destroyers and submarines. Both the GRSE and MDL are fraught with limitations and require expansion, if not relocation. Both the GRSE's future and its ability to build bigger vessels are impeded by the decay of the Kolkata port and the low draft of the Hooghly River. Consultations have been on with western firms to help modernise both the GSL and GRSE, but so far little has been achieved. MDL too has a limited capacity for expansion because of limitations of draught (4.5 meters) and its sandwiched location between the Port Trust and a ship breaking yard.

Ordnance Woes

Many of India's 41 OFs, 16 of which were inherited at the time of Independence, are of World War-II vintage and structurally inefficient. They do not engage in their own R&D and are unable to decide their own vendors. The OFs are primarily manufacturing defence products based on transfer of technology from the original equipment manufacturers, mostly overseas based and from the DRDO. It has made only modest progress in R&D despite creating 11 Ordnance Development Centres with identified core technologies. Rather, there continue to be complaints of defective ammunition being produced in the OFs which have had to be returned. For example, between 2012 and 2015, 429 different types of defective equipment including ammunition produced at the OFs were returned by the armed forces due to quality issues. There have also been long gestation periods to develop and increase capacities at these factories. It took nine years (from May 2002 to August 2011) for the Ordnance Factory Board to create a per annum capacity of building just 30 Indian-made Arjun tanks. It took six years to create the per annum capacity of assembling 100 Russian-made T-90 tanks and has been unable to increase this capacity to 140 despite efforts since 2011. After four to five years of effort, it has been unable to add even 50% success in increasing the capacity for assembling Russian-supplied T-72 tank variants, manufacturing armoured vehicle engines from 350 to 750 per annum and augmenting the capacity to manufacture spares needed to overhaul T-72 and T-90 tanks.

The manufacturing technology has either been procured on a transfer of technology basis or what has been handed to them by the DRDO, much of which is low-end. The OFs are known not to have a system to prepare a balance sheet in order to have an appraisal of their cost of products and materials. Even a standard accounting system and technical audit by an independent agency has not been introduced in the OFs. The private sector is estimated to produce ten times more than what the 41 OFs put together produce despite having two lakh employees. In order for them to be more progressive, productive, competitive and financially viable, OFs could perhaps be turned into a corporation on the lines of, for example, the Indian public sector telephone company, the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and allow them to select vendors and to take a decision in financial and in R&D matters independently.

Clearly, the problems are known. But solutions have to be found and enforced on a war footing. Any dereliction is inexcusable if self-reliance is to be achieved.

(Dinesh Kumar is a defence analyst)

<https://www.sundayguardianlive.com/news/defence-psus-ordnance-factories-dire-need-overhaul>

Shot in the arm for Make in India as Army chooses desi weapons over Israeli Spikes

By Ajit K Dubey

New Delhi: At a time when the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is making fast progress in the field of missiles, the Indian Army is planning to scrap a project worth over Rs 3,000 crore to acquire more than 4,000 Israeli Spike anti-tank missiles and go in for an indigenous weapon system.

The Spike missile deal has been in the making for a long time but has been delayed or scrapped for one reason or another.

"The Made in India weapon system called the Man Portable Anti Tank Guide Missile (MP-ATGM) is progressing very fast and is going to go for its second trial soon. The Army is now planning to go for the indigenous system over the Spike missile," top government sources told MyNation.

Earlier, the Army had plans of acquiring over 4,000 missiles for meeting its urgent requirements for the missiles which would be used for destroying enemy tank regiments in case of war and fulfill its full requirement of 20,000 ATGMs by inducting the MP-ATGM in large numbers.

However, now the thinking in the force is that since the Spike missile would also take two to three years after the signing of the contract for induction, it would be better if the Army goes in for the DRDO equipment which would be ready for induction at around the same time-frame, the sources said.

An Israeli vendor had been selected for supplying over 8,000 Spike ATGMs to India but the tender was withdrawn by the defence ministry. Later, it was decided that the requirements would be met through a mix of import and local production. But, now the situation has changed again.

Meanwhile, the state-owned Bharat Dynamics Limited has also laid foundation of the production line for the MP-ATGMs to be produced for the Army in Hyderabad.

The Israeli vendors had also tied up with a private sector company in India for local production of the missile systems.

<https://www.mynation.com/news/army-hunts-down-terrorists-kashmir-untrained-local-indian-troops-pjgilh>



Mon, 10 Dec 2018

Navy on a major capability upgrade

By Dinaker Peri

In the backdrop of increasing responsibilities in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and increased Chinese presence increasing the tempo of overseas deployments and exercises to an all-time high, Indian Navy has embarked on a major capability upgrade. Highlighting this, a Navy officer said that this year on an average 35 Navy ships were deployed every day.

The Navy has undertaken 113 port calls including operational turnarounds this year and has participated in 21 exercises including the Indra series with Russia which began on Sunday," the officer said.

With Navy ensuring the presence of at least one major ship at all critical choke points in the IOR under its Mission Based Deployments, the operational requirements have significantly gone up. On the other hand, India has significantly increased its military to military engagement with friendly nations as part of its defence diplomacy and the Navy is at the forefront.

"As on today, 32 ships and submarines are presently under construction in Indian shipyards. These include the Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC) Vikrant, Project-15B destroyers, Project-17A stealth frigates, P-28 Anti-

Submarine Warfare (ASW) Corvettes, Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPV) and Scorpene class submarines... In addition, Government approval has also been accorded for 56 Ships and six submarines,” Navy Chief Adm Sunil Lanba said last week.

The 56 ships are in various stages of procurement and include replacements for existing platforms as well as new additions. “Construction activity will be spread over a decade,” Adm Sunil Lanba stated.

These include next generation frigates and destroyers, four stealth frigates from Russia, four Landing Platform Decks (LPD), 16 shallow water craft, 12 mine sweepers, five Fleet Support Ships (FSS), four survey vessels, 2 Diving Support Vessels (DSV) among others.

The six submarines under Project-75I are being procured through the Strategic Partnership (SP) route for which the submarine specific guidelines are expected to be issued shortly taking the much delayed project forward.

Fair winds

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- **These include the Indigenous Aircraft Carrier Vikrant at Kochi**

- **In addition, government has accorded approval for 56 ships and six submarines**

- **These include four stealth frigates from Russia, four landing platform decks, 16 shallow water craft, 12 mine sweepers, five fleet support ships, four survey vessels, two diving support vessels and next generation frigates and destroyers**



- **Six submarines under Project-75I being procured through Strategic Partnership model**

- **Process also on for procurement of 57 carrier-based fighter aircraft, 111 naval utility helicopters and 24 multi-role helicopters (MRHs)**

Process is also on for procurement of 57 carrier based fighter aircraft, 111 Naval Utility Helicopters (NUH), 24 Multi-Role Helicopters (MRH). There is a larger requirement of 123 MRHs which will fly from ship decks.

The Navy currently has 117 ships, 15 submarines and over 200 aircraft and has set an ambitious target of 200-ship force by 2027.

All this comes in the backdrop of China increasing its presence and establishing permanent facilities in the IOR. Adm Lanba stated that China deploys six to eight warships in the IOR at any given time and the eighth Chinese submarine since 2013 to enter the region returned to its base in October.

India has of late signed a series of logistics agreements --

US, France, Singapore and more in the offing -- which the navy expects will increase its reach and also offset the deficiencies in numbers in the near term. Navy has also signed white shipping agreements with 19 countries of which 12 have been operationalized for increased Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA).

Outlining an aircraft carrier based force structure for the Navy, Adm Lanba said, “In my opinion a three Carrier Battle Group (CBG) will suffice the Indian Navy’s role to provide maritime security in the IOR.”

While Navy is looking for more submarines, Adm Lanba said the high cost of a carrier is justified by the capability a CBG can bring to bear. “A submarine can’t do the same role as a CBG or a carrier can do. Submarine is an ideal platform for sea denial, while a CBG is the most potent platform for sea control,” he added.

However, the force enhancements are contingent on increased budgetary allocation which has not seen a major increase over the years. Also all three services are on a major modernisation drive putting further pressure on the limited resources.

Sun, 09 Dec 2018

Indian, Russian air forces to kick start war game in Jodhpur on Monday

New Delhi: The Indian and Russian air forces will begin a 12-day war game in Jodhpur on Monday with an aim to enhance their operational coordination. The exercise - Aviaindra - will be unique as the Russian Air Force will not bring its assets and will take part in the drill using Indian platforms, said an official of the Indian Air Force said.

The first edition of the exercise was held in 2014.

Most of the fighter jets being used by the Indian Air Force is of Russian origin, and already both the air forces have achieved significant levels of interoperability, said the official.

Highlights

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- The first edition of the exercise was held in 2014.
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Recommended By Colombia "In India, the pilots from the Russian Federation Aerospace Force will fly alongside their Indian counterparts in the IAF aircraft, which are common to both air forces," the defence ministry said in a statement.

Russia has been a major partner of India in the defence sector and the cooperation has been steadily growing further

In October last year, India and Russia held a 10-day mega war game involving their armies, navies and air forces for the first time to further ramp up military ties.

The exercise Indra, which took place in Russia, primarily focused on achieving coordination between forces of the two countries in a tri-services integrated theatre command scenario.

It was for the first time, India participate in a tri-services exercise with a foreign country with a large scale participation by the Navy, the Army and the Air Force.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/indian-russian-air-forces-to-kick-start-war-game-in-jodhpur-on-monday/articleshow/67010530.cms>

Sat, 08 Dec 2018

Aero India 2019: PM Modi, Sunita Williams to attend India's premier airshow touted as 'runway for a billion opportunities'

Briefing media persons on the Aero India 2019, a senior defence officer said that for the first time civil aviation exhibition will be subsumed into the upcoming edition of Aero India -2019

Y Huma Siddiqui

With tag line of Aero India 2019 "runway for a billion opportunities," and the logo inspired by indigenous Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas, is expected to be inaugurated by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He is planning to kickstart the four day show starting Feb 20, 2019.

Briefing media persons on the Aero India 2019, a senior defence officer said that for the first time civil aviation exhibition will be subsumed into the upcoming edition of Aero India -2019. While Aero India has been primarily military aircraft, this was often followed by a civil aviation exhibition held in Hyderabad.

Sharing the highlights of the event next at a briefing, the official said that “The 12th edition of Aero India at Bengaluru will have theme based activities like : Day 2 there will be a drone competition for start-ups and Day 4 will be women’s day. Indian origin US astronaut Sunita Williams is scheduled to attend the show on Day 4. Other women achievers will also be present. There will be a vintage rally too on one of the days. ”

Several firsts are planned in the 12th edition of the show which includes a round table of global Chief Executive Officers (CEO), a student’s event, academic seminars and photography contests. The CEOs roundtable is scheduled on the inaugural day and in which about 15-20 CEOs from global aerospace majors are expected to participate.

Youth, especially the students are being encouraged to participate and present projects related to the defence sector and is being promoted by the Ministry of Defence and a joint secretary is overseeing the efforts, the official added.

Also, two international level academic seminars based on the theme are planned in which top academicians and subject matter experts will present their papers. There will be two photography competitions, one before and one during the event — one for professional and one for the general public.

Some webinars are also in the offing — one on Regional Transport Aircraft and another on growth of airborne surveillance systems — for which registration can be done on the event website.

In terms of participation, so far 158 Indian companies and 106 foreign companies have registered. Companies from the US , France, the United Kingdom, Russia, Israel, Germany, Belgium, Japan, Switzerland, Ukraine, Singapore, Sweden, Spain, South Africa, Italy, the United Arab Emirates, South Korea, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Canada, and Australia are among those which are expected to participate.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/aero-india-2019-pm-modi-sunita-williams-to-attend-indias-premier-airshow-touted-as-runway-for-a-billion-opportunities/1407260/>