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India to attain self-reliance in key Missile Tech by 2020

In a major achievement for the country, India's premier research agency DRDO is now likely to achieve complete self-reliance in developing critical missile technologies by 2020, which will be two years ahead of the schedule.

The expertise developed by the DRDO's missile complex in the field of seekers is also going to help the country save at least Rs 15,000 to Rs 20,000 crore in the near future, as the equipment forms 35-40 per cent of the total cost of missiles.

Soon after coming to power in 2014, the NDA government had tasked the DRDO to develop critical technologies, such as seekers, by 2022 to achieve self-reliance and end imports.

The recent success of the BrahMos land attack cruise missile, with an indigenously-developed seeker, proved the prowess of the indigenous technology development programme for tactical missiles. The DRDO is now moving ahead with this programme, and is likely to achieve self reliance in tactical missile systems by the year 2020 itself, government sources said.

It was for the first time that the BrahMos missile, capable of travelling at speeds of up to Mach 3.0, or three times the speed of sound, was tested with indigenously developed seeker technology. The seeker - developed by the DRDO - determined the accuracy of missile by guiding it to the target at a range of 33 km.

India is already self-sufficient in the field of strategic long range missile systems, such as the Agni missile series, which can hit targets from ranges between 700 km to 5,500 km. The seeker technology, which helps a missile to hit its target with pinpoint accuracy at close ranges, was till recently not available with India and it was being sought from foreign countries.

Under an earlier plan to develop short range surface-to-air missiles, India had committed to spend over Rs 30,000 crore under which it wanted to get the seeker technology from the foreign vendor, but the project got scrapped later.

However, the year 2017-18 has seen DRDO's missile complex and other laboratories script a success story in field of seeker technology with Ku Band, X band, and one more type of seeker achieving great success. Government officials said indigenous seekers of various type has already been successfully flight tested in Astra, Nag anti-tank guided missiles, quick reaction surface-to-air missiles and the Akash next generation missiles.

The indigenous development of seekers has also helped in improving the accuracy of missiles as well as save at least 30 to 40 percent cost of all the missile projects.

As per the plans of the DRDO, all the future missiles in the country's arsenal, including the Akash-Mark1, Nirbhay long-range land attack cruise missile, Anti-Radiation Missiles and air-to-air missiles, will be equipped with indigenous seekers, helping country save billions of dollars, the officials said.

The success in seeker and navigation programmes for missiles has also helped the DRDO to take up new futurists projects which will help in reducing important dependence.

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