

Rustom-2 drones set to be ready by 2020: DRDO chief

The Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) on Friday said the Rustom-2 drone would be ready for use in two years. Speaking on the sidelines of the convocation ceremony of the Defence Institute of Advanced Technology (DIAT) here on Friday, DRDO chairman S Christopher said the drone will be delivered to the Indian armed forces by 2020. Rustom drones are medium-altitude, long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV). They are a part of India's Rs1,500 crore UAV project that will cater to the needs of the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force.



Rustom-2 is being developed on the lines of USA's predator drones. It will carry out surveillance and

reconnaissance for the armed forces and has a 24-hour endurance cycle. Christopher said Rustom-2 was successfully tested earlier this year at the Aeronautical Test Range in Karnataka's Chalakere. "With the help of production partners Hindustan Aeronautics Limited and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) our endeavour now is to deliver the drone by 2020. As of now, we are evaluating its endurance capacity, which is 24 hours with all types of payload," he said. A DRDO official said the army and navy together require 150 drones. "The United States and other western countries have for long used drones against their enemies. The US forces used UAVs against terrorist organizations in Afghanistan. Considering the security scenario in the north and northeastern

regions of India, the army should be equipped with advanced drones," said a senior DRDO scientist.

"There is a growing demand for 'Akash', an all-weather, medium-range, surface-to-air missile from several countries," Christopher said, while declining to name the countries as "we are negotiating with them". The Centre has allocated Rs18,000 crore to DRDO for the 2018-19 fiscal year. "The airborne early warning and control system (AWACS), stealth technology for unmanned combat aerial vehicle, indigenous technology for cruise missile, etc, are on top of our priority," he said. "We are currently working on various artificial intelligence (AI) projects," said G Athithan, DRDO's director general for micro electronic devices and computational systems. "High-altitude trials of the indigenously developed advanced towed artillery gun system were successful. More trials will be held at the Pokhran firing range," said Pravin Kumar Mehta, DRDO's director general for armament and combat engineering systems.

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