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DRDO growing Nauni varsity's temperate plants in high altitude areas of J&K

Over 30000 plants including apple supplied in the past ve years Every year, the Dr YS Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry (UHF), Nauni gets an overwhelming response from farmers for the quality planting material prepared by it. Besides the farming community, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has also become a regular buyer of temperate fruit plants from the University.

For the past five years, Leh based Defence Institute of High Altitude Research (DIHAR); a constituent laboratory of the DRDO has been purchasing temperate fruit plants from the university.

This year, the premier research laboratory bought 6070 plants of apple, pear plum and peach. With this number of plants bought by DIHAR in the past ve years has crossed 30,000. This planting material is being used for raising fruit plantations in high altitude areas of Jammu and Kashmir where the army is posted.

Dr Anand Kumar Katiyar, Scientist D of the DRDO who has been visiting the university every year explained that the objective is to ensure regular supply of fresh fruits to the army personnel in these tough terrains. Moreover, some of the plants are also distributed to the farmers in these areas in order to improve their socio-economic conditions as the excess fruit produce can be sold at the army counters.

“Traditionally, there were very few fruit trees in these high altitude regions. Some wild species of apples were present, but the fruit was of poor quality and highly perishable. The apple plants which are bought from the university are of good varieties which are performing quite well in these conditions,” said Dr Katiyar.

He added that the planting material has been planted in various places including Nubra Valley, Leh, Kargil, Karu regions of Jammu and Kashmir. In addition, some plantations have also been carried out in the Twang area of Arunachal Pradesh.

Besides ensuring easy availability of fresh fruits to the defence forces, these plantations carried out between 11,000 to 13,000 feet above sea level is helping scientists to undertake research and determine the ideal fruit varieties for these extremely cold regions. The scientists of DRDO undertake the scientic handling of the plants and also provide trainings to defence sta and civilians.

“The plants, especially apple supplied by the university have shown excellent results in the areas where the DRDO scientists have undertaken plantations. The university is not only supplying plants, but the two organisations are also collaborating in research. Varietal trials at dierent altitudes and studies like zero energy cold storage cellar at DIHAR have also helped to maximize the survivability of these fruit plants,” said Dr JS Chandel, Professor and Head Department of Fruit Science of the University. He added that the scientists of DIHAR and UHF have also published joint research publications.

DRDO's 'Dare to Dream' contest

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has launched 'Dare to Dream', a contest to encourage startups and individuals to come up with innovative defence and aerospace technologies.

Applicants are invited to send innovative, workable proposals that can impact various related domains. The winning entries, which should specify the plan of executing it into a prototype, stand to get one of five prizes ranging from ₹3 lakh to ₹10 lakh in two categories.

The military R&D organisation has asked for solutions in the areas of Artificial Intelligence, Autonomous Systems, Cybersecurity, Hypersonic Technologies, Smart Materials, Quantum Computing, and Soldier as a System. DRDO labs are already working in these areas, an official said.

Last April, the Ministry of Defence initiated a wider plan — iDEX or Innovation for Defence Excellence — aimed at financially supporting innovators from among small- and medium-sized industries, individuals, startups, and institutes.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/drdo-dare-to-dream-contest/article26240991.ece>



Tue, 12 Feb 2019

Integrity clause often given a miss, say defence ministry officials on Rafale row

UPA-negotiated purchase of heavy lift transporters from US didn't have sovereign guarantee: Official
By Sudhi Ranjan Sen

Several big-ticket purchases by the three service arms do not have either an integrity clause or a sovereign guarantee, senior defence ministry officials said on condition of anonymity.

They were responding to a report in The Hindu that pointed to the lack of both in the Rafale deal and a demand from the Congress, citing this report, for a probe into the defence acquisition.

For instance, the Manmohan Singh led UPA-government negotiated the purchase of heavy lift transporters from the US through the Foreign Direct Sale route (FMS) that did not have an integrity clause or a sovereign guarantee, one of the officials said. The 10 C-17 strategic lift aircraft cost the exchequer \$ 4.1 Bn. Similarly, the six US-made C-130 heavy lift aircraft bought in 2010 for \$ 1bn came without any integrity clause or sovereign guarantee, this person added.

Similarly, equipment and hardware from Russia, too, come without either of these. "The Su-30Mki – the current frontline fighters – bought in the 1990s and early 2000 came without these," a second senior official said. "The S-400 – a missile defence shield – deal will also not have these provisions," he added. India has bought tanks, warships, and other equipment from Russia without either, the official said.

Air Marshal SBP Sinha, who headed the team that negotiated the Rafale deal confirmed to news agency ANI that previous government-to-government contracts with Russia and the United States do not have the anti-corruption clause.

Russia refused to sign a deal with a so-called Pre Contract Integrity Pact (PCIP) when India was negotiating the purchase of helicopters to carry senior functionaries like the President and Prime Minister.

The 36 Rafale fighters were bought under the 2013 Defence Procurement Policy (DPP) framework. According to DPP 2013, equipment bought from friendly countries need not follow the "Standard Procurement Procedure" (SPP) or "Standard Contract Documents." The section of the DPP that deals with Intergovernmental Agreements (IGA) says; purchases made "would be based on mutually agreed provisions by the Governments of both the countries." These provisions were included in the Defence Procurement Policy 2016, the last policy paper released by the government to guide defence acquisition.

Some officials did raise the issue of the integrity clause during the year and half of negotiations. This included former MoD (Finance) officer Sudhansu Mohanty too raised these issues. "However, the officers did not raise the issue before the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) – the highest body in the defence ministry chaired by the defence minister that decides on acquisitions," Sinha said. The objections or disagreements were "that of individuals and not of the negotiating team. Individual views shouldn't be projected as a view of the committee," he added. And all members of the team "signed" the report "on the basis of which MoD moved Cabinet Committee on Security for a nod to purchase the 36 fighters," he said. There was no dissent or disagreement.

“In my long years with MoD, I don’t remember integrity pacts or sovereign guarantees coming from Russia or for that matter any other government. These provisions are there for individual vendors, not for negotiations between governments,” the former head of MoD Finance Amit Cowshish said.

Congress spokesperson told Manish Tewari told a news conference that the BJP-led NDA government waived the anti-corruption clauses in the Rafale deal because there was corruption.

He said the implications of the waiver of the anti-corruption clauses in the deal meant that the French, especially the suppliers — Dassault and missile-maker MBDA — were indemnified against any wrongdoing.

“Essentially, what it means is that those who essentially paid, through whom the transactions were routed, and the end beneficiaries, get fully indemnified...Government doesn’t have the legal locus to cancel the contract,” Tewari added.

Earlier, Congress president Rahul Gandhi too referred to the report on the waiver of the anti-corruption clause.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/integrity-clause-often-given-a-miss-say-defence-ministry-officials-on-rafale-row/story-6DQ35vHVZv0W0y4ZHkdfiI.html>



Tue, 12 Feb 2019

Lohia Group forays into defence sector

The Lohia group plans to set up the new composite unit at a 10-acre facility that will come in UP Defence Corridor

By Manu Pubby

New Delhi: The Kanpur-based Lohia group has acquired an Israeli composite manufacturer, marking its entry into the defence sector, and plans to set up a facility to produce aero structures for UAVs, fighter jets, commercial aircraft as well as space missions.

The Lohia group, which is a global plastics manufacturer, plans to set up the new composite unit at a 10-acre facility that will come in the Uttar Pradesh Defence Corridor and is likely to get multiplier benefits under the defence offset rules in the offing.

The acquisition of the Israel-based Light & Strong Limited, which makes aerospace and military grade carbon fibre and glass fibre composite components, has been concluded at an undisclosed price.

The Israeli company supplies components to manufacture military platforms and has a current annual revenue of over \$15 million. While the Israeli facility will continue to produce for the local market, the Lohia Group said a new plant in India will be used not only to meet offset obligations for defence contracts but also to target global markets.

“We wanted to diversify and the defence and aerospace sector is still growing. We don’t feel it is saturated as yet. We are doing something that requires a fairly high amount of technology and were waiting for the right company and product to come along,” Anurag Lohia, director, Lohia Group, told ET.

Work on the new facility at Kanpur is expected to start by the middle of this year with the group confident that production can commence by early next year. The Indian facility will also target customers such as HAL, BDL and ISRO that need composite parts for ongoing projects. “The idea was to bring high technology to India and the best way we found after exploring companies across the world was through the right acquisition,” Pavitra Goel, Lead - Aerospace & Defence, Lohia Group, said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/lohia-group-forays-into-defence-sector/articleshow/67948397.cms>