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US keen to buy defense equipment from India's DRDO: Defense Minister

The United States has expressed interest in buying defense equipment from India's Defense Research Development Organization (DRDO), Defense Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said during a press briefing on the eve of Aero India 2019 Airshow.

Details of the list of items considered by the US are being discussed, Sitharaman added.

"Indonesia, UAE and Vietnam have also shown interest in missile systems like Brahmos and Akash. Different countries are asking for different DRDO equipment. But we can't disclose anything unless the deal has concluded," the minister added.

John Rood, Under Secretary of Defence for Policy revealed US' plan for a missile defence collaboration with India earlier this month.

"The Indians have substantial capabilities domestically of their own and they've done some development of missile defences. So the degree to which they're interested in acquiring or working collaboratively with us in the US remains to be seen," Rood said.

"It's early to determine how far that will go," he had added.

The US granted India the status of Strategic Trade Authorisation-1 (STA-1) in 2018. India is the third Asian country to get the status after Japan and South Korea. The status eases India's defence procurement from the US.

http://www.defenseworld.net/news/24313/US_Keen_to_Buy_Defense_Equipment_from_India_s_DRDO_Defense_Minister



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Sitharaman unveils statue of former President APJ Abdul Kalam at DRDO

Bengaluru: Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman unveiled statue of former President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam and inaugurated Kalam Sadbhavana Park in DRDO township in the City on Tuesday. Dr Kalam started his career in DRDO at Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE), Bengaluru and reached to the highest level as the President of India.

Speaking on the occasion, Ms Sitharaman recalled the contributions of Dr Kalam to the Science and Technology. "He was not only a great Scientist but also, a man with human touch who radiated warm affectionate energy all around and touched the heart and mind of everyone".

She said that "there is message for all of us to emulate him by devoting our energy towards the karmas without thinking of the gains".

Dr G Satheesh Reddy, Secretary Department of Defence R&D & Chairman DRDO in his address said that the Great Visionary's reminiscence and inspirational words will keep motivating the scientific fraternity to aspire for greater heights and to set new benchmarks in the years to come.

The seven feet tall bronze statue of Dr Kalam is surrounded by the models of Agni missile and Supersonic Cruise Missile Brahmos at the rear side and in the front, Light Combat Aircraft-Tejas and Airborne Early Warning & Control Aircraft (AEW&C) – Netra.

<http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/sitharaman-unveils-statue-of-former-president-a-p-j-abdul-kalam-at-drdo/>

The Tribune

Wed, 20 Feb 2019

Aero India opens today, IAF still staring down the barrel

Air Force operating at its lowest strength of 31 fighter squadrons

By Ajay Banerjee

New Delhi: An upgraded version of the Arjun tank, having better firing and mobility, has been accepted by the Army following month-long validation trials in Rajasthan. Yet another ‘Aero India’, an exhibition where global fighter jet makers, among others, will showcase their wares, opens here tomorrow.

The five-day (February 20-24) show is like to be a re-run of what was happening over a decade ago when India, in 2007, invited bids to procure 126 fighter jets under the medium multi-role combat aircraft (MMRCA) project that ending up being scrapped.

The subsequent order for “only” 36 Rafale jets is now a “political football” between the ruling BJP and the Opposition-led by Congress while the Indian Air Force (IAF) is gasping to maintain dominance and is operating at its lowest strength of fighter jets.

In April year, India announced a fresh bid to procure 110 fighter jets under a multi-billion dollar deal. Seven major global companies will be in attendance at the Yelahanka Air base at this metropolis. The ones in the race are Lockheed Martin’s F-16IN, US Boeing’s F/A-18IN, Eurofighter Typhoon, French Dassault’s Rafale, Swedish Saab’s Gripen and Russian MiG-35 and the Russian Sukhoi-35. Other than the Sukhoi-35, all others were also a part of the MMRCA race.

The Aero India, a biennial event, is used by foreign companies to showcase what they offer, including jets, copters, drones, radars and air defence missiles. New Delhi is the biggest importers of weapons and equipment accounting for nearly 12 per cent of all global sales.

In the past decade, little has changed for the IAF, rather it has slid downwards. Apart from the purchase of 36 Rafale fighter jets — the first one expected in September this year — and the addition of 12 Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas, the situation remains critical.

The IAF is now operating at its lowest strength of 31 fighter squadrons — around 16-18 planes in each. The Cabinet Committee of Security has mandated 42 squadrons for a simultaneous two-front war scenario with Pakistan and China. Even the addition of 36 Rafale and 123 Tejas projected over the next eight years will not help the IAF in stemming the downward ebb. Over the next four-five years, around 110 planes of MiG 21 and MiG 27 series are slated to retire.

The manufacturer that India finally decides to collaborate with will have to commit on transfer of technology for the jets to be built in India and also help in the advanced medium combat aircraft that the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is planning.

The 110 fighter jet deal and the AMCA will be separate projects, but will keep the winning company interested in India for the next four decades or till the AMCA keeps flying.

Facing dangerous shortfall

- India needs at least 400 fighter jets over the next 10 years with a mix of single-engine and twin-engine options
- These will be needed to reach 42 squadron mark and also for replacing the ageing jets
- Cabinet Committee of Security has mandated 42 squadrons for a simultaneous two-front war with Pakistan and China.

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/aero-india-opens-today-iaf-still-staring-down-the-barrel/731599.html>