

AN indigenously developed Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) radar system played a key role during the IAF's February 26 airstrike on a JeM camp in Balakot. Two units of the 'Netra' AEW&C system each mounted on an Embraer ERJ-145 business jet were used during the strike and in the February 27 battle with the PAF. AEW&C systems like the Netra feature electronically-steered radar which can detect, and classify aerial targets 200 kilometres away.

The combat performance of the system has boosted spirits at five Bengaluru-based DRDO labs which contributed to the project.

INDIA'S NETRA SHINES



The unmanned aerial vehicle, the DRDO Netra.

They could also make a case to acquire additional units of the indigenous radar.

The IAF currently operates three Israeli Phalcon AWACs systems mounted on an IL-76 aircraft, which have a 400 km detection range. A

proposal to buy two more units worth \$800 million is pending before the CCS.

"More orders for the Netra will bring down unit costs and build technological capabilities within the country," says Dr S Christopher, former DRDO chief, who as Centre for Airborne Systems (CABS) director had steered the project.

The DRDO proposed mating a 400-km range 360 degree circular version of the Netra on a long range commercial airliner like the Airbus A-330, which can stay airborne for 12 hours.