

Pratibha: DRDO must keep deadlines in mind

Visits missile complex in Hyderabad

Special Correspondent

HYDERABAD: President Pratibha Patil said here on Tuesday that the time frame required for development of technology, production and subsequent induction of weapon systems into the armed forces needed to be compacted.

"DRDO (Defence Research & Development Organisation) has to carry this burden and I am confident that it has the capability to do so," the President said during a visit to its missile complex on New Year's Day, which marks the beginning of DRDO's Golden Jubilee year.

The strategic and tactical missile strength of India and state-of-the-art technologies that went into making them were on display during the President's visit.

The indigenously developed mobile autonomous launcher carrying three canisters of the supersonic BrahMos cruise missile; the recently tested interceptor missile AAD; surface-to-surface missile Prithvi; the anti-tank missile Nag; and the surface-to-air missile Akash along with their launchers

were on view.

Ms. Patil was received and taken around the complex by Scientific Adviser to Defence Minister M. Natarajan, Chief Controller R&D (Missiles and Strategic Systems) V.K. Saraswat and other top DRDO scientists. She also saw Agni I, II and III missiles in separate locations in the complex.

Addressing the scientists, the President said: "The work of the DRDO team gives us a great sense of pride. However, many challenges remain. India's large size and its long land and maritime borders require constant defence preparedness.

A strong security apparatus is also necessary for the economic and social development of the country.

"In today's world with new threat perceptions, defence and security systems are increasingly moving towards technology-intensive options. Our defence forces need to upgrade and modernise their equipment to keep pace with the rapid changes taking place in the world. To ensure that our armed forces are not deprived of timely ac-

quisition of new weapon systems, it is of critical importance that delivery targets are met on schedule."

Pointing out that R&D in weapons was a high cost venture, she said the aim should be to make it cost-effective. The DRDO could leverage partnership with the domestic private sector in the development of high technology.

"Similarly, the spin-offs from defence-related research could be shared with industry and revenues so generated ploughed back into research."

Giving an overview of the missiles developed under the Integrated Guided Missiles Development Programme (IGMDP), Dr. Saraswat said, "In this complex, we have successfully developed Prithvi and Agni missiles during the missile technology control regime (MTCR) and delivered to users thereby providing strategic strike capability to the nation."

He said the recent flight test of Agni-III with long range changed the strategic balance in the sub-continent and provided the much-needed deterrence to the nation.