

DRDO TO FUND FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND 5 DEEP TECH RESEARCH FOR MILITARY USE

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Each of the 5 proposed projects have been earmarked a maximum of ₹50 crore

The projects funded by DRDO will fall under the categories of indigenisation, futuristic and disruptive technology and cutting edge technology

Backed by the ₹1-lakh crore corpus for promoting transformative potential research, announced in the interim Budget, the Defence and Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is set to launch a first-of-its-kind initiative that will remodel its research program towards emerging technologies for military usage.

India's premier government defence research agency is funding five high-value deep tech innovation projects, with each project having been allotted a maximum of ₹50 crore to promote indigenisation of defence products having long-term positive impact on national security.

Futuristic And Disruptive Tech

The primary focus of DRDO's program is to propel research in futuristic and disruptive technologies in the sphere, including quantum, block chain and artificial intelligence. Futuristic and disruptive technologies are innovations that significantly alter or revolutionise existing industr services.

There are global instances of such programs being helmed by state defence research organisations like the US Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) on the lines of which the DRDO is trying to fashion its deep tech initiative.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has given his nod to the investment for the deep tech projects that would be undertaken through the DRDO's Technology Development Fund (TDF) which has been engaging the private industry, mainly MSMEs and start-ups, for the R&D in military hardware and software armed forces require, sources in the organisation said.

Three broad contours have been identified for inviting proposals from the industry for deep tech projects in five areas. They are in the categories of indigenisation, futuristic and disruptive technology and cutting edge technology.

Reducing Imports

While through indigenisation, the DRDO will seek to reduce dependence on imports of systems, sub-systems and components needed by the tri-services, by way of futuristic and disruptive technologies it will attempt at getting solutions to concepts that do not exist in India or even abroad, DRDO sources said.

Market Inputs

The DRDO sought market inputs and had sessions with other stakeholders to decide on the five deep tech topics, informed sources. The details of projects, for which funding will be rolled out in five tranches, will be published soon inviting interests from the industry. The successful bidder may get 90 per cent of the funding of the project cost.

Depending on the quality of response, the DRDO is open to giving chances to more than one successful participant, allowing them to come up with innovations that may require a long gestation period.

Though volume of funding would be project-specific, DRDO officials stated that normally a maximum of 20 per cent grant would be released in the first instalment and the remaining would follow on the basis of appraisals by a integrated team that will house, among others internal experts, outside experts, user experts, certifying agencies and qualifying experts.

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