

## Scientists need better pay for better output: Natarajan

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), celebrating 50 years of its establishment this year, Monday put across the message that its scientists were not immune to market forces and needed better remuneration.

'The scientific temper, while being lured by technology challenges, is not immune to the world outside. The phenomenal remuneration package of India's private sector is a powerful inducement in drawing away the scientific talent from government establishments,' M. Natarajan, scientific advisor to the defence minister, said here on the occasion of World Technology Day.

'The Sixth Pay Commission, which we hoped would address this aspect, has not met the expectations of the scientists and technical staff. In our view, the government must provide special packages to attract, retain and reward scientific and technical skills.

'Putting research labs in the same category as other administrative organisations will not be fair and might damage the scientific fabric of our country,' Natarajan added.

According to the ministry, a total of 1,107 scientists, mostly young entrants, have resigned from the DRDO between 2003 and 2007, implying that on an average one person leaves every two days.

Created in 1958 to be India's premier defence research organisation and enhance the country's self-reliance in military requirements, the DRDO is today reeling under a major manpower crunch. It is able to fill up only 60 to 70 percent of the vacancies of scientists arising in the organisation.

'Fortunately, in its 50th year the DRDO has over 50 percent of its technical work force in the age group of 25 to 35 years. These budding technocrats have a great future and enough challenges in the current and foreseeable projects, which they can enjoy. They are gifted with better capability, access to world-wide information and greater networking,' Natarajan said.

While affirming the government's commitment towards broad-basing the defence industry in the country, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said the DRDO was here to work in that direction.

'The technologies developed by DRDO have stimulated the growth of our public and private sector defence industry. In order to derive maximum benefits from our emerging capabilities, it is essential that all stakeholders - the DRDO, armed forces and the industry - work in close coordination with each other,' Manmohan Singh told the gathering of DRDO scientists.

Acknowledging that India is among the few countries in the world which has a broad-based defence industry, the prime minister said: 'With India's rapid economic development in the last few years, our economy is able to sustain greater investments in the area of defence research and development.'

Manmohan Singh also sought greater international cooperation to achieve self reliance in defence production. Indian industry has been developing defence equipment under the licensed transfer of technology.

'I am happy to know that DRDO, in collaboration with its Russian partner, has successfully developed the Brahmos supersonic cruise missile for land targets for the army as well as sea targets

for the navy. This is a shining example of international cooperation in the area of defence technology,' he said.

Referring to delays in the delivery of defence equipment, the prime minister said: 'All efforts must be made to ensure timely deliveries of technologies and equipment to our defence forces.'

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