

Thales aims to double Indian business in five years

French defence and electronics major Thales hopes to double its India business from 250 million to 500 million euros in the next five years with increased sales in the military and civilian sectors.

'We have a long involvement with India and hope to increase our sales to double in next five years both in defence and civilian areas,' Francois Dupont, Thales Managing Director and amp; Country Corporate Director, told a group of visiting Indian journalists.

'Every year we are registering a growth of five percent to eight percent in business in India,' he added.

'In 2000, our sales were 90 percent in the defence sector and 10 percent in civilian area. In 2006, our sales were 80 percent in the civilian sector due to the boom in the Indian aviation market. Now we are at 50 percent in both the sectors,' Dupont explained.

Thales has created a niche for itself in the electronics sector and is also supplying radars and other modern equipment to the Indian armed forces. It also has clients like Delhi Metro, Jet Airways, and Kingfisher Airlines in the civilian sector.

'We are currently working very actively for an air defence project of the Indian Army that entails the purchase of 1,000 short range missiles,' said Bachu Murthi, vice president (Strategy) of Thales' air systems division.

'According to the proposal, the initial 200 would be supplied from here and the rest would be manufactured in India under transfer of technology agreement,' he added.

Murthi said Thales would also be bidding for the 'half-a-dozen other tenders to be floated by the Indian armed forces'.

Francois Quentin, Thales' senior vice president (Aerospace Division) said the company would be submitting a proposal for upgrading the Mirage-2000 delta-wing fighter of the Indian Air Force (IAF) to keep them in the skies for another 25-odd years.

The IAF operates two squadrons (40-plus aircraft) of the fighter that were purchased in the 1980s. Thales had recently signed a contract for upgrading six of the Indian Navy's Soviet-era minesweepers into state-of-the-art mine hunters.

Marc Coulaud, Asia regional director for land and joint systems, said the company was looking for more joint ventures with Indian companies both in the private and public sectors.

'We will bring in the technology and our Indian partners will bring in the markets,' Coulaud pointed out.

Thales already has a joint venture with Indian company Rolta, a developer of IT-based geospatial information systems (GIS), engineering design automation solutions and eSecurity services worldwide.

Thales employs some 120 people in Delhi and [Mumbai](#) and plans to increase the number to 300 in 2008, and to 500 by 2010.

Globally, Thales employs 22,000 R and amp;D engineers out of a total workforce of 68,000 in 50 countries. Its revenues in 2007 were in excess of 12 billion euros.

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