

Visitors get feel of combat systems at Defexpo

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Unmanned systems were among the key attractions for visitors at the DRDO pavilion at Defexpo here with many exhibitors at the exposition allowing people to get first-hand feel of combat systems on display through detailed presentations or limited access.

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has organised a demonstration of some of its unmanned systems which is attracting visitors.

DRDO officials said that unmanned systems were expected to play a dominant role in future warfare.

Apart from medium-altitude long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicle Rustom-II, DRDO has displayed Daksh, a remotely operated vehicle that can neutralise improvised explosive devices.

It has also displayed a Daksh-mini that can carry out similar task inside confined spaces such as an aircraft or a railway compartment.

DRDO officials said that another display that received several queries is Netra v2 - a mini UAV which can be manually transported and used for counter-insurgency operations, border management, hostage situations, disaster management and even crowd control.

"It is like a speck in the sky that sends real-time videos of what it sees. It can go up in a jiffy and return on its own," a DRDO official told IANS.

An official involved in organising the event said that the number of visitors at Defexpo appeared less compared to last exhibition two years back and the probable reason could be that its dates coincided with the Autoexpo this year.

"I think there should have been better coordination between the government agencies involved on the dates," said the official, who did not want to be quoted.

He added that there appeared no difference in the number of business visitors but the number of general visitors appeared to be less so far.

The official said there was a lot of enthusiasm among Indian participants apparently due to efforts by the government to boost indigenisation of defence products.

Several companies have showcased new combat systems in the show that began Feb 6 and will conclude Feb 9.

Tata Motors has showcased "Kestrel" - a wheeled armoured amphibious platform for providing mobility to frontline soldiers along with armour protection.

The company also showcased its LAMV - a light armoured vehicle for reconnaissance mobility, protection

and firepower.

Among the displays in the Israeli pavillion is the Spike Team Trainer of Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Ltd, which provides tactical training for missile firing team through simulation.

Rafael officials said the system had been displayed for the first time in any defence exhibition.

While the focus of the Defexpo is mainly defence technology, there are a few stalls dealing with seemingly mundane matters including dietary needs and dresses.

A colourful stall has dresses, insignias and ranks of officers of armies, mainly from Africa. Another stall offers options for making cooking for troops in higher altitude areas more convenient and environment-friendly.

Some exhibitors appear to be indulgent and are allowing visitors to get inside combat vehicles and get their pictures taken from the outside.

Raghu, a student from Chennai who is preparing for the civil services examination, said he came to the Defexpo to see the weapon systems.

"I have never seen them," said Rahgu as he posed for photograph holding an AK-47 assault rifle in the Russian pavilion.