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## Drones by IIT-Bombay grab attention at show

By *editor*

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The Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) or drone has always remained in the news for its use in natural calamities, in Aamir Khan's film 3 Idiots and by Fancesco Pizzeria in Mumbai to deliver pizzas. The UAV was again seen grabbing public attention in the 4th edition of the India Engineering Sourcing Show in Mumbai that began on Tuesday. Even Mumbai police use it to monitor big rallies.

Idea Forge's UAV, which is called NETRA, developed in collaboration with the Defence Research and Development Organization, (DRDO), has been used extensively by the armed forces, paramilitary forces and other security agencies. It had partnered with the National Disaster Response Force and played a crucial role in identifying survivors and assessing damage during the Uttarakhand floods last year. It was also deployed by the Gujarat government during the 2013 Bhuj floods. According to a press release, the drones have also been used by the National Security Guard, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, etc.

NETRA is a completely autonomus UAV, which can be launched from a small clearing by the road side and made to fly over the area of interest upto 400 metres. Fitted with GPS and powerful sensors, it can fly on its own and return to the home base after completing the mission. It boasts of having the smallest auto-pilot in the world. During flight, the UAV sends continuous real time video of every movement on the ground. Its Vertical Take Off and Landing, (VTOL) mechanism makes it extremely user friendly.

Idea Forge was started by five IIT-Bombay graduates Ankit Mehta, Vipul Joshi, Ashish Bhat, Amardeep Singh and Rahul Singh way back in 2008. Though, the IIT technocrats are tight lipped about the price, market estimates put the cost of UAVs at Rs 25 lakh upwards.

Besides surveillance, the drones can be effectively used for aerial cinematography, replacing costly helicopter shooting, crowd management during festivals and fairs, the release said.

Even though the opportunity looks attractive, it may not easy doing business. The image resolution of the drone is still not as sharp as one would like them to be. Funding also continues to be a problem as most of the investors have no clue about the benefits of drones, other than publicity stunts pulled off by Amazon or Fancesco Pizzeria.

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