

Serious About Defence

With huge investments in capacity-building, Punj Lloyd is here for a long haul

A FORCE REPORT

Despite the ministry of defence's laid-back attitude towards greater participation of the private sector in the defence industry, Punj Lloyd, which has made substantial investment in its defence business by creating state-of-the-art capabilities, is looking forward to early culmination of at least four programmes.

Top on the list is the upgrade of Indian Army's Zu-23 anti-aircraft gun. In collaboration with a Slovakian company EVPU as technology partner, Punj Lloyd is proposing to convert the mechanical guns into the electronic ones with laser optical fire control system. As part of the programme, Punj Lloyd has already converted one gun given by the Indian Army and is now waiting for the no-cost, no-commitment (NCNC) trials to commence. Competing with them on this programme are Tata Power SED, Larsen and Toubro, Alpha Design Technology and Bharat Electronics Ltd. The 'Buy Global' programme involves 468 guns.

This programme is closely followed by the upgunning of 130mm M-46 gun to 155mm. Punj Lloyd has partnered with the Serbian company Yugo Import for this 'Buy and Make Indian' programme. The Indian Army had asked for Detailed Project Report (DPR), to which Punj Lloyd has already responded. "We are now expecting the Request for Proposal (RFP) to be issued by August 2012," says R.K. Sharma, president, defence, Punj Lloyd in a chat with FORCE.

The third programme is battlefield management system (BMS). "We are now recognised as a serious Indian player for this 'Make India' programme," says Sharma. The company is in final stages of talks with an American OEM for partnership to provide technology that will enable it to become the lead integrator for the programme. The Indian Army is likely to issue the expression of interest later this year. "We have been a surprise entrant in this market," says Sharma. "And I am confident that we will get this contract." Apparently, as part of the pilot project, the army would want the winning competitor to network anything between 500 to 1,200 nodes.

The fourth programme is for the manufacture of components for Indian Artillery's field guns through Ordnance Factory Board. Punj Lloyd has been selected by OFB for this programme and as a trial it has been asked to develop certain parts to begin with.

Even though most of the programmes are still in the pipeline, Sharma believes that through some strategic well-timed alliances Punj Lloyd has emerged as a committed player in the defence sector. "If at the end of the Show, we are able to convey this message to a larger audience, I would call it our successful outing at the Show," he says. ||



R.K. Sharma