

DRDO - FICCI Joint Initiative for Accelerated Technology Assessment and Commercialization of Defence Technologies for Industrial and Civilian Spin-offs

24th February 2009, New Delhi: Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO), the R&D arm of Ministry of Defence, GoI in partnership with FICCI, India's apex industry chamber has initiated a "Technology Assessment and Commercialization (ATAC) Programme" for the Assessment of DRDO developed technologies for commercial markets. FICCI has already been successfully running technology commercialization programme under the banner of India Innovation Growth Programme. IC² Institute of Texas University at Austin provides technical help to FICCI in the assessment of technologies through its patented process that enabled NASA to successfully commercialize NASA technologies for commercial markets.

The DRDO - FICCI ATAC programme aims to create a commercial pathway to deliver technologies developed by DRDO for appropriate commercial markets for use in civilian products and services. This programme is first of its kind to be undertaken by DRDO in association with FICCI to actively spinout several of DRDO's technologies for appropriate commercial markets both nationally and internationally. In the very first year of operation of the programme as many as 26 DRDO labs across India are participating and over 200 technologies are being assessed under this programme by FICCI. The technologies that are currently assessed are from sectors as diverse as electronics, robotics, advanced computing and simulation, Avionics, optronics, precision engineering, special materials, engineering systems, instrumentation, acoustic technologies, life sciences, disaster management technologies, information systems, etc.

Under a unique process of technology assessment and commercialization, FICCI along with the IC² Institute of Texas University has identified a few technologies which were initially only exposed to the defence sector. FICCI along with the IC² institute is now exploring civilian applications for the same. Within a brief span of four months since the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the DRDO and FICCI, several leading players of the Indian industry have submitted their Expression of Interests (EoIs) to FICCI for technology transfer for a number of technologies selected. Expressions of Interests have been received from industry players such as Larsen and Toubro Limited, Astra Microwave Products Limited, Hi-Tech Projects, Alkali Metals Ltd, Encon Thermal Engineers (P) Ltd., GTL Limited, United Communications Limited (Mauritius) among many others.

On this occasion, Shri M. Natarajan, Scientific Advisor to Raksha Mantri, Secretary - Dept. of Defense R&D and DG, DRDO said that "while DRDO continues its effort in developing cutting edge technologies for Indian Armed Forces, it will also actively pursue spinning out relevant DRDO developed technologies for non military applications. This in the long run will help the industries to produce high quality, high reliable industrial products and systems at an affordable cost. DRDO will very soon come out with an incentive scheme that would make DRDO an attractive and sought after destination for the young and talented. "

Welcoming the guests and participants at the event, Dr. Amit Mitra, Secretary General, FICCI said, “ Whilst there is no dearth of innovative talent in the country, we lack an organized structure to assist the commercialization process. FICCI and IC2 collaboration is a major step in creating such support service. This will benefit not only the individual innovators as can be seen from the programme that is being conducted along with the Department of Science and Technology and the Lockheed Martin Corporation but also various public funded R&D establishments. DRDO has done phenomenal innovation work for creating a large degree of self-reliance for the Indian defence. There are many innovative technologies within the DRDO framework, which could lead to significant success in the civilian side as well. This programme is an attempt to make that happen. We look forward to institutionalizing this framework with DRDO in the days to come.”

Dr Prahlada, the key initiator of this programme in DRDO said, “DRDO’s proactive and professional approach to assess the DRDO developed technologies through FICCI has shown tremendous success. This process has the potential to run parallel to development of defence technologies in the organisation and can benefit commercial exploitation at an early stage while perfecting the technologies for military applications. The technologies are selected through a 2 tier structured process to ensure only appropriate non-sensitive technologies are explored for commercial use. This programme will also help the organisation to come out with appropriate incentive schemes for the participating scientists and staffs on successful spinouts. This will further help DRDO scientists to embed innovative ideas and solutions in DRDO products and systems and in the long run will enable DRDO to attract and retain talent in the organisation. ”

Len Denton, Program Manager stated “The IC2 Institute is pleased to be selected to work with DRDO and FICCI on this new commercialization program. We are looking forward to work with DRDO’s scientists and engineers to find exciting new markets and uses for their outstanding technologies.”
