

# Fine-tuning of Defence Acquisition Procedures for Atmanirbhar Bharat

*Arvind Khare\**

*The Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020 (DAP 2020) was created primarily to focus on self-reliance in the defence sector, which is considered crucial for an 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. The objective is to minimise import dependencies, and to exploit the export potential of domestic defence production, with the spirit of 'Make in India and Make for the World'. DAP 2020 provides for various mechanisms in this direction, viz. processes of 'Make' categories, 'Design & Development', Strategic Partnership, Development cum Production Partner mode, funding schemes for R&D and innovation in different formats of iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence), Technology Development Fund, etc., while also focusing on 'ease of doing business'. This article is an attempt to examine how far the objectives of the DAP 2020 have been achieved, and also highlights some relevant issues that need to be addressed in the next version of DAP.*

**Keywords:** *Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020, Self-Reliance, Atmanirbhar Bharat*

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\* Mr Arvind Khare is an Indian Defence Accounts Service (IDAS) officer and presently Senior Fellow at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA), New Delhi.

The Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020 (DAP 2020) was crafted with the prime focus on self-reliance in the defence sector as one of the important objectives in the direction of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. In simple terms, self-reliance in defence has to be viewed with the perspective that indigenisation, innovation, R&D (Research & Development), manufacturing and production of various defence technologies and weapon platforms as per the present and future military requirements of the Armed Forces should be done *within the country*, either solely by our own industries, academia and government organisations (viz. Defence Public Sector Undertakings [DPSUs] including erstwhile Ordnance Factories, Defence Research and Development Organisation [DRDO], etc.), or by capability development through Transfer of Technology (ToT), Foreign Direct Investments (FDI), strategic alliances, Joint Ventures (JVs) and technological collaborations, bilateral agreements, or in a hybrid mode. The objective is to minimise import dependencies, and to exploit the export potential of domestic defence production, with the spirit of 'Make in India and Make for the World'.

DAP 2020 provides for various mechanisms in the above direction, viz. processes of 'Make' categories, 'Design & Development' (D&D), Strategic Partnership, Development cum Production Partner (DcPP) mode, funding schemes for R&D and innovation in different formats of iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence), Technology Development Fund (TDF), etc. DAP 2020 has also been focused on 'Ease of Doing Business'. Now, after around four years of execution of DAP 2020, it is time to introspect and examine whether the DAP 2020 has achieved its objectives. How far has the objective of self-reliance been realised? It is also crucial to understand whether the industries have been benefitted and the capital acquisition process simplified and expedited. Moreover, during this period, new challenges in the form of new war tactics, changing nature of battlefield, rapidly changing technological scenario, dynamic geo-political aspects, etc., have also emerged. So, whether DAP 2020 provisions are really in a position to address the requirement in improvisation in the acquisition process to cater for these new challenges, is required to be seen. In this article, an attempt has been made to highlight some of the relevant issues which need to be addressed in the new avatar of DAP, expected in 2025.

The first issue is Research and Innovation, both of which are important pillars of economic growth and for achieving self-reliance in defence sector. DRDO is the flagbearer of defence research and development in the country and is achieving higher milestones year after year. The bulk of defence exports orders being executed by defence manufacturers

of the country are based on technologies developed by DRDO. Several technological feats have been demonstrated by DRDO in recent years, e.g., world's longest range artillery gun, missiles of all types, armament of all types, radars, naval materials, nuclear submarines, air-independent propulsion, underwater sensors and weapons, space defence technologies, radios, electro-optics, etc. DRDO is the only technology organisation in the world to have successfully demonstrated simultaneous engagement of multiple targets from aerial platforms. Thus, contrary to the perceptions in some quarters, 'DRDO's pursuits of self-reliance and successful indigenous development and production of strategic systems and platforms have given quantum jump to India's military might, generating effective deterrence and providing crucial leverage', as noted in 42<sup>nd</sup> Report of Standing Committee on Defence (SCoD 2023–24). The report acknowledges the functioning of DRDO, its R&D deliveries within its limited resources, and its efforts to participate with academia and industry in the direction of self-reliance and indigenisation, and recommends provision of adequate funds for its ongoing and future projects. Likewise, schemes for funding industry and academia viz. TDF, Research Board, Extra Mural Research, DRDO Industry Academia Centres of Excellence (DIA-CoEs), etc. (under Department of Defence Research & Development), and different formats of iDEX (under Department of Defence Production) have fructified many successful projects bridging technological gaps. Despite meagre R&D funding, much has been achieved where ever there were less bureaucratic controls, i.e., scientists/engineers had at least partial autonomy in decision-making and the projects were co-owned by developers and technology users.

It is worth noting that R&D projects and innovation activities are neither revenue procurement nor capital acquisition or contracts. Working on research projects is full of uncertainties, since the possibility of not achieving the desired outcome is quite high. Even the research projects termed as failure are, many a times, not really a failure, but foundation for successful outcome or certain experience gained, which can be utilised somewhere or the other. Suitable provisions/mechanisms in procedures and financial rules for allowing/absorbing genuine failures/delays in R&D projects duly considering them as stepping stones to succeed ahead will certainly help in encouraging scientific community to take risks while making innovations. Thus, the general procedure for revenue procurement or capital acquisition should not be applicable for R&D activities and financing/funding for R&D. Research projects (particularly under major R&D funding schemes, i.e., TDF) cannot be treated as contract with fixed terms and conditions and

sacrosanct outcomes. Similarly, insisting for TDF projects to be approved for AoN (Acceptance of Necessity) by MoD (Ministry of Defence) like capital acquisition is also not justified, particularly when substantive financial powers (up to Rs 50 crore per project) have been delegated to DRDO by MoD itself. To be fair to the government, it is necessary to mention that duly considering the necessity for enhancing financial support to private industries and start-ups, the government about three years ago revised the funding limit under TDF up to Rs 50 crore per project at DRDO HQ level, which is quite substantial. However, this is within the existing budgetary provisions of Department of Defence R&D, which is far low in comparison to major defence technology nations in Europe, America and Asia. Nonetheless, bureaucratic approach for handling TDF projects may ruin the very purpose of this ambitious and noble scheme to support and encourage industry for R&D activities.

In an article titled 'Technology Development Fund in Need of Reorientation',<sup>1</sup> published in *Bharat Shakti* on 1 January 2024, Amit Cowshish has mentioned that "Technology Development Fund (TDF) is one of the most successful micro-schemes managed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), but lately, it is facing unexpected headwinds. It's reliably learned that very few if any, new projects have been sanctioned in the past several months... Despite increasing the project cost to Rs 50 crore from the earlier Rs 10 crore limit, the Technology Development Fund, which had proven a remarkable instrument for progressing research, has run into impediments. Most of these impediments stem from a new set of most voluminous requirements. Ironically, the scheme started encountering rough weather after the project cost limit was increased to Rs 50 crore." The author has further mentioned that "there is a need to consider whether the TDF scheme requires reorientation, procedures need to be simplified by eliminating bureaucratic stranglehold...Development of cutting-edge, disruptive technologies calls for non-bureaucratized, disruptive thinking".

There is an extensive need to detach/modify the existing provisions for TDF from/in DAP, as these provisions unnecessarily create an impression to treat TDF projects as per capital acquisition procedure, and that separate set of rules/manuals are required for handling Research Projects and R&D financing/funding with actual 'ease of doing business' on ground, where adequate provisions should also be made to absorb the financial losses during R&D. Nevertheless, once an innovative technology is proven or a successful prototype is developed after R&D, their procurement/acquisition in the desired quantity can be done as per the relevant provisions.

Notwithstanding above, similar models of foreign countries having successful and advanced defence R&D base (like US-DARPA: Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency and SBIR: Small Business Innovation Research) can be scanned for adaptation with due customisation as per Indian environment. It may be interesting to note that only 5–10 per cent DARPA projects meet their a priori stated goals, including timelines, and often it takes political intervention to introduce successful technologies in services. Contrary to this, in Indian scenario, all projects are required to succeed as per a priori stated goals and timelines, and the researchers and research organisations stand high chances of condemnation/criticism if the expectations are not met.

Duly considering the potential of start-ups and individual innovators in the field of defence R&D for achieving the objective of self-reliance, Government of India launched INDUS-X (India–US Defence Acceleration Ecosystem) in 2023, under the umbrella of iDEX for enhancing strategic and defence partnership between US and India through technological collaborations between start-ups of both the countries. The government has also increased the funding limit under iDEX-ADITI (Acing Development of Innovative Technologies with iDEX) up to Rs 25 crores per project in March 2024. Outcomes of these initiatives are yet to be evaluated.

However, suitable changes in various SOPs (Standard Operation Procedures) in vogue for handling R&D projects are now need of the hour to cater to the changing priorities of the government and aspiring expectations from private sector in R&D. Finance Minister in her budget speech for 2024 announced a new scheme with a corpus of Rs 1,00,000 crores with a 50-year interest-free loan to provide long-term financing with long tenors and low or nil interest rates, for encouraging the private sector to scale up research and innovation significantly in sunrise domains (for strengthening Deep-tech technologies for defence purposes and expediting atmanirbharta and innovation in the defence sector). Nonetheless, lot of clarity about this scheme is still awaited.

Notwithstanding above, it has been observed that due to lack of technological competence and lack of willingness to invest in original defence R&D work for major weapon platforms and hardcore military technologies (being highly capital-intensive), private industries so far have not been able to deliver satisfactory performance in IDDM (Indigenously Design, Developed and Manufactured) and Make-I & II categories mentioned in DAP 2020. It is felt that the private sector in India, despite having potential, may take time-span of at least one decade to demonstrate and prove their capabilities and

competence in the field of research, designing and development in defence sector.

It is evident that inventive/innovative research in the field of D&D (Design and Development) has been done primarily by DRDO due to apparent and tangible reasons of their massive R&D infrastructure, a big size crew of experienced scientists and availability of government funding. Nevertheless, the delay in successful completion of some of the projects by DRDO labs could be due to the uncertainty factor in research work and sometimes due to bureaucratic approach in the system and execution, but there is no doubt in DRDO's technological competence in handling big ticket projects, as also noted by Parliamentary SCoD in 2023–24. DcPP has been a successful model of involving private industries/DPSUs with DRDO since inception of any major weapon platform and through the designing and development phases, till completion of the projects. However, DRDO is expected to bring more transparency and accountability in selection of Industry for DcPP and to encourage wider participation of private sector.

DAP in its new avatar can consider active and wide participation of private sector (including MSMEs) in DRDO-driven projects in various formats, viz. D&D projects, Build-up projects, TD (Technology Demonstration) projects, MM (Mission Mode) projects, S&T (Science and Technology) projects and big projects under DcPP model, in transparent and prudent manner. Moreover, it is also suggested that compulsory involvement of DRDO along with the private sector in Make-I, Make-II, D&D projects and also in Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) projects, should be considered a sustainable option. This will serve multiple purposes like utilisation of massive technology infrastructure and knowledge bank of DRDO, grooming of private sector in DRDO set up in R&D activities with no extra cost, achieving the desired synergy between government set-up and private sector, and a reasonable surety about completion of the projects.

Furthermore, it is needless to mention that the high-powered committee on DRDO's review/restructuring has also apparently suggested to de-limit the role of DRDO only to the core R&D activities and development of disruptive technologies, and to withdraw from defence production, along with supporting the active involvement of academia and private industry (including start-ups) in defence R&D by opening its doors to them for technology testing, co-designing and co-development, sharing of assets/resources, etc. New DAP, while being crafted, should give due emphasis on the revised role of DRDO in sync with the recommendations of the high-powered committee accepted by the government.

Besides this, it is necessary to understand that the level of R&D being expected from the private sector under Make-II model on industry's own cost (without government funding) appears to be impractical. Possibly, this is one of the reasons why Make-II model has not been able to deliver the expected successes in original prototype development, as industry at present is not fully ready to invest in actual R&D. It would, thus, be advisable to have provisions in new DAP to grant at least 15 per cent advance payment (in the form of government funding adjustable in the final payment) to the industries for Make-II projects, which is generally allowed for execution of any contract as per the applicable financial rules. Moreover, assuring 'MoQ-Minimum Ordered Quantity' in all R&D projects and projects under DcPP mode, Make-II, etc., will encourage the industry to come forward to invest in R&D, which is necessary to make R&D projects economically feasible and commercial-potential worthy.

The second issue is Indigenous Content (IC), which is presently sacrosanct in different acquisition categories. Just to recall, presently, 'Buy (Indian-IDDMM)' category refers to the acquisition of products from an Indian vendor that have been indigenously designed, developed and manufactured with a minimum of 50 per cent IC; 'Buy (Indian)' category refers to the acquisition of products from an Indian vendor which may not have been designed and developed indigenously, having 60 per cent IC; in 'Buy & Make (Indian)' category also, a minimum 50 per cent IC is required in the Make portion; in 'Buy (Global-Manufacture in India)' category also, meeting minimum 50 per cent IC while indigenous manufacturing is mandatory; and in 'Buy (Global)' category, meeting minimum 30 per cent IC is a must for an Indian vendor. Many a times, it has been observed that in case of acquisition proposals of critical technology items, present limits of IC are quite high. Due to these stringent provisions, since any slight non-compliance in IC will lead to ineligibility or disqualification during bid evaluation, some vendors may attempt to manipulate their IC declarations, just to meet the strict IC condition, leading to ambiguous and deceptive situation. These provisions need to be reviewed and modified suitably, particularly in light of the recent thoughts/opinions that judging IC content based on technological contents would be more relevant and effective rather than merely on cost basis.

It can be suggested that IC content requirement should be defined on a case-to-case basis in consultation with DRDO or external experts, which can vary from one project to another, keeping into consideration relevant factors like nature of the project, criticality of the item, capabilities of domestic vendors, etc. Now, time has come to switch over from sacrosanct IC to

graded approach for IC on case-to-case basis, and to introduce incentivisation for higher IC, higher IDDM, state-of-the-art technology and higher performance. Moreover, there should be a progressive, pragmatic approach with sufficient flexibility towards rules/provisions (just to obviate a slave-like adherence of the Book), but without compromising on propriety, probity, prudence and nation's good.

In addition to the issue of high IC contents, it is also felt necessary as an important policy reform to be made in the DAP, for addressing the concerns and apprehensions of foreign vendors/strategic collaborators/JV partners about IPR (Intellectual Propriety Rights) sharing in a practical manner, to facilitate and encourage the influx and absorption of advanced military technologies in India through various formats of acquisition, viz. ToT, G2G/IGA, FDI, suo-moto, technological and strategic collaboration, co-creation, co-development and joint manufacturing, and also under different 'Buy' & 'Make' categories, etc. This exercise should be done keeping in view an in-depth study (to be done independently) on the issue—why presently Foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers (FOEMs) are hesitant in making technological investment in India?

However, it should be noted that while entering into expensive technological bilateral agreements or IPR sharing, there should be equal level playing field for foreign firms and Indian partners duly optimising national interest, which means that as spin-off, Indian side should get adequate trade opportunities in their foreign counterparts' country in same or the other sectors, where India has excellence and future potential. Technology transfers and IPR sharing pacts should be constructive and advantageous to both the partners, duly mitigating the risks of adverse impact on our indigenous industry, and without ignoring the potential of future indigenisation of the technology and proliferation of technology in different/diverse fields of dual use, as national technology growth should be the foremost aim in all such pacts while making defence acquisition deals.

The third issue is Make-III scheme. DAP 2020 provisions, though, briefly mention about Make-III scheme, where the item would not essentially be designed/developed indigenously, but can be manufactured in India as import substitution for product support of weapon systems/equipment held in the inventory of the Services; and the Indian firms may manufacture these either in collaboration/JV or with ToT from foreign OEMs. However, a detailed user-friendly SoP needs to be devised for Make-III, as this scheme has potential not only to cater for manufacture of high-tech defence items in India (where indigenous capability is lacking), but also could be quite



successful in inviting foreign OEMs for doing business in India and from India. Further, it would be more advantageous to India, if FDIs in defence sector are encouraged in the Make-III format, as it will generate greater commercial opportunities for tech-entrepreneurs and create occupational avenues for skilled jobs in India besides providing opportunities for Indian partners to deepen and broaden their tech- knowledge base by the way of co-designing and co-development. This would be a futuristic approach in the direction of making India as an imperative/vital defence technology hub.

The fourth issue is Offset Management. Offset provisions in defence contracts obligate the sellers to reinvest their sale-proceeds in certain activities in the purchasing country under contractual obligations, which have now been well-established integral component in international defence acquisition deals across the world. Offset dynamics, in Indian context, depends upon many factors as per defence offset policy<sup>2</sup> viz. percentage of this clause in the contract; nature of offset options viz. investment in indigenous ventures, technology transfers, high-tech training, etc.; selection of Indian offset partners (IOPs); multiplier options; benefits in other sectors for consequent economic development, etc. It is therefore important to be wise, aware and attentive about inclusion of offset provisions in defence contracts and its appropriate management.

It has been observed that offset management in Indian defence contracts has not been satisfactory so far, despite strict provisions in DAP and defence offset policy in this regard, as it is evident that many defence suppliers have lapsed on performing against offset obligations in the past.<sup>3</sup> According to a recent report of the Standing Committee on Defence, a total of 57 offset contracts had been signed by the MoD till March 2022, involving approximate offset obligation of US\$ 13.52 billion to be discharged between 2008 and 2033. The offset obligation due as on 17 January 2022 amounted to US\$ 6.8 billion, but the vendors had submitted offset claims amounting to US\$ 4.59 billion, and after audit claims worth US\$ 3.37 billion only had been 'disposed of'.

Regarding defence offsets, there have been many pertinent issues, viz. poor offset management due to inadequate/uncoordinated planning, execution, monitoring, supervision at all the three ends, i.e., Buyer (Procuring agency, Contract Executing Authority, Acquisition Wing, Defence Offset Management Wing [DoMW]), Seller (FOEMs) and IOPs; and improper selection of IOPs, and reluctance of FOEMs to deliver their offset obligations (under-realisation of offset benefits, zero/poor value addition against offset, delay at different stages from contract to delivery, etc.). Moreover, in case of

offset failure, taking strict punitive action against those FOEMs perhaps have not been found as a viable and pragmatic option due to many bureaucratic, procedural, economic and geo-political reasons.

In order to face the challenges in offset management and to make it more efficient, significant revisions have been brought in practices, which include streamlined applicability of offset through broadened avenues for their discharge; refined mechanisms of implementation and monitoring; flexibility for vendors to plan offset activity; incorporation of multipliers; development of end-to-end web portal having focus on digitisation of the entire process for offset contract compliance. These are welcome steps. However, the enormous lapses in fulfillment of offset obligations express the constant need for strict offset monitoring. Wherever found justified in case of offset failure, punitive action like penalties, debarment, etc., are required to be initiated as per the defence offset policy. Nevertheless, there should be some provisions for rewarding in case of successful and timely execution of offset (in terms of preferential treatment at the time of future acquisition/procurement, contract enhancement/loading additional quantity through tolerance/option clause/ repeat order, etc.). It may be suggested that DAP and defence offset policy need to be further evolved on the issue of offset management, by including strict and pragmatic provisions on these issues.

Defence offset policy has aimed primarily to achieve 'directed offsets' in achieving lifetime support for the equipment being procured for reducing the lifecycle costs and in developing Tier 2 and Tier 3 ecosystem for subsequently supporting indigenous production in the long run. Now, overall economic development and industrial benefit through diverse offsets are also being aimed, using a whole-of-government approach. DAP provisions should cater to adjust/divert offset obligations to the wide civil sector also (beyond civil aerospace and internal security). Besides this, it is equally important to ensure through DAP provisions on offset management that opportunities to gain offset benefits should not be concentrated in the hands of few selected vendors, so that horizontal growth of multiple companies in diverse sectors deriving benefits from the same contract can be ensured on ground.

It has been apparent that the countries, focusing on R&D in offset, gradually turn to technology-led innovation; and in the long run, spin-off effect of policy-led technological advancement through defence offsets results not only in growth and progression in defence sector, but also in a cross-cutting impact on diverse sectors as well. This will gradually facilitate innovation-based transformation and remove bottlenecks to percolate and outspread spin-off effects from defence sector to other sectors as direct/

indirect spill-over. There are many such successful models available in public domain<sup>4</sup> to substantiate this concept. Many advanced nations like Japan, Canada, Brazil, Israel, Spain, Saudi Arabia, etc. (all having similar economic conditions like India in the post-World War era), adopted offset policy with parallel focus on other sectors besides defence, and got enormous benefits by acquiring various technology transfers through offset from US and other developed countries, and developed a strong defence sector as well as resilient R&D based industrial base in other sectors also, as spin-off effects of offset policy-led technological advancement.

Few examples for growth of multiple sectors using technology transfers achieved through direct/indirect offsets are—the aerospace and automotive industries of Saudi Arabia and Brazil, the automobile sector (Bullet train from Fighter Aircraft co-production) in Japan, and the electronics and aerospace industries' progress in Spain. Moreover, Israeli Aircraft Industries, Israeli Military Industries, Cyclone Aviation Products Ltd, TAT Technologies, etc., got huge technological boost as spin-off effect of ToTs achieved by Israel through 100 per cent offset against its purchase of Combat Aircraft from McDonnell Douglas. Saudi Arabia has driven its offset policy to enhance its chemical industries, by establishing 'Synthomer Middle East' as a Joint Venture initiative, as a part of the offset deal with the UK government and the British Aerospace System (BAE). Saudi Arabia also undertook a training and education programme (for generating highly skilled technical jobs) from Boeing in the offset obligation against the purchase of 'Peace Shield land-based air defence system'.

For India also, ToTs achieved through offset can create similar multifaceted effect, like R&D for development of cutting-edge technologies, establishing robust defence industrial base and generating highly skilled technical trained manpower. Thus, focusing on improving the economy's ability to absorb ToT in high-tech areas and reap economic benefits, India's defence R&D sector requires further boost up to target R&D-led co-design and co-production of equipment (through bilateral agreements/MoUs and mutual innovation programmes) and by the way of technology transfers under offset deals. This can also play an augmentative role in the upcoming SPVs with private industry for major military weapons and platforms, and for programmes like SkillUp India, Start-up India, etc., designed to fast-track self-reliance in all critical fields. Further, artificial intelligence (AI), semiconductors, robotics, quantum technologies, hypersonic technologies, high power lasers, secured communication, propulsion systems, exotic materials, etc., are the areas that can be quite persuasive for R&D-led co-design through Offset, which can

in turn supplement India's economic growth. Option of generating Offset in terms of critical technologies would always be a more advantageous one, rather than in terms of cost alone. Therefore, there should be a provision for a capable technological committee to assess/verify the technological aspects in offset investments on case-to-case basis, rather than having some pre-fixed offset formulae.

Moving towards a comprehensive approach towards Offset spin-off, Defence Offsets Management Wing (DOMW) of MoD should work in close coordination with the ministries/organisations handling R&D and industry related activities like Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Ministry of Heavy Industry, Department of Public Enterprises under Ministry of Finance, Ministry/Department of Science and Technology, Principal Scientific Adviser, Department of Space, Department of Atomic Energy, etc., for better coordination and decision-making regarding development/proliferation of technologies to different sectors, in the larger interest of the economy. New avatar of DAP should be in position to provide suitable enabling mechanism on these issues.

The fifth issue is that of procedural streamlining, which is not the least but an important one. DAP also needs to be reviewed with the objective of revising the timelines for various activities like floating RFI (Request for Interest)/EOI (Expression of Interest), obtaining AoN, finalising of RFP (Request for Proposals), QRs (Qualitative Requirements), technical evaluation/trials, submission of reports, approval process, so that acquisition process can be completed in a more expeditious manner. For this purpose, procedural steps can be identified where timelines can be squeezed by parallel and collegiate processing of activities.

Further, pre-qualification/eligibility criteria (about mandatory licenses, turnover and experience clause, conditions for consortium bidding, etc.) should be unambiguously defined in a pragmatic manner and no compromise should be made post RFP issuance in public domain and during bid evaluation/trials, so that only capable firms are invited to participate and be qualified during bid evaluation/trials. Present lenient provision in DAP 2020 for giving opportunity to the firms for getting/furnishing industrial licenses till the stage of completion of bid evaluation/trials needs to be reviewed, as this appears to be unfair to the eligible firms having the requisite licenses in advance, as sufficient time since the stage of issuance of RFI/EOI in public domain till the bid submission is always available to all interested and potential bidders to get requisite license in time; also this could be a

cause of delay in completion of bid evaluation/trials due to participation of frivolous vendors.

Moreover, there is a need for delegation of certain administrative-cum-procedural powers at the level of Acquisition Wing in a collegiate manner, for handling/addressing procedural issues relating to deviation from standard process or clauses of RFP and contract (viz. payment terms or delivery schedules or trials, etc.), and to modify them, if needed, so as to obviate the requirement of approaching DPB (Defence Procurement Board)/DAC (Defence Acquisition Council) for small and routine issues and to expedite the decision-making process.

It may also be suggested that some limited financial powers in case of capital acquisition be delegated at the level of Army Commanders (and equivalent in Air Force and Navy) in consultation with their financial advisers (however, with prior AON approval at the Ministry/Service Headquarters [SHQ] level) for expediting decision-making process relating to their operational preparedness, which will also help in grooming more officers to handle the specialised/cumbersome process of capital acquisition. This learning opportunity at present is practically available only during their posting at the Ministry/SHQ level.

Notwithstanding above, it is also felt that a fast-track procedure is required to be devised in DAP for procurement of COTS (commercially available off-the-shelf) items in OCPP (Other Capital Procurement Procedure) mode, whose small requirements can hold up some big and critical projects. Indigenisation is best suitable for long lead, prohibitive, costly and recurrently required items. Besides this, QCBS (Quality and Cost Based Selection) mode should also be adopted in defence acquisition, where QRs are not fixed against a defined problem area or technology gap or performance parameter and acquisition is required in a time-bound manner for a turnkey solution. It will be appreciable, if DAP includes suitable mechanism for adopting QCBS mode of acquisition without any subjectivity, which can also be monitored by inclusion of external expert agencies.

Apart from this, DAP should also have detailed provisions for an independent public-private partnership model (for sharing financial, technological and human resources) without procedural impediments, for synergizing the endeavours for achieving 'Atmanirbharta' in defence sector. DRDO Review Committee also seems to have proposed a top body, i.e. 'Defence Technology Council' (DTC) chaired by Prime Minister (having Defence Minister and National Security Advisers as Vice-Presidents and Chief of Defence Staff, Principal Scientific Advisor, the three Service

chiefs and their Vice Chiefs, Representatives of Academia and Industries as members in the Executive Committee) to determine the country's defence technology roadmap and decide on major projects and their execution by public and private sector.<sup>5</sup> New DAP should be crafted keeping in view the role, mandate and functions of above referred DTC and national aspirations, if approved by the government for being constituted, as it will have major impact on the role of DRDO, DPSUs and Industry.

Lastly, there has been a long-felt need to concise the DAP document, duly cut-sizing the unnecessary elaboration and displacing various annexures/appendices regarding formats and government orders from the main document to softcopy links.

At the end, it will not be out of place to mention that the 'Amrit Kal' now places a larger responsibility on the existing procedures and processes to be more pragmatic and accommodative to address diverse challenges and to be target-oriented for yielding expeditiously in the direction of self-reliance.

## NOTES

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