

Interview with Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi, Chief of the Naval Staff, Indian Navy



VAYU: We know the Indian Navy currently leases the Predator UAS and the MQ-9B variant has been ordered. However, could you update us on UAVs manufactured in India like the Drishti/Hermes 900 and other possible domestically produced UAVs that the IN currently uses or plans to operate with?

CNS: The indigenous version of the Hermes 900 MALE RPA has been named as Drishti 10. Presently two systems of Drishti 10 have been procured by Indian Navy. Since induction they have been seamlessly integrated into our surveillance set-up. With extended reach, satellite controls and endurance exceeding 12 hours, they have bolstered our persistent surveillance capabilities.

We are making efforts on multiple fronts to ensure indigenous manufacturing and procurement of UAVs. We are supporting the DRDO Technology Demonstrator (TD) project by progressing case for procurement of four Indian Unmanned Aerial System (IUAS). This RPA system is an indigenously developed MALE RPA (TAPAS in pre-operational role) developed by DRDO/ADE.

We are also supporting Indian Start-Ups by progressing Multi Utility Long Endurance (MULE) RPA

and Monorotor Drone (iDEX Project). The Rotary wing RPAs are being developed to operate from our ships for undertaking ISR missions and build maritime domain awareness. These platforms will be equipped with EO/IR, COMINT and various other surveillance payloads.

Another iDEX project, High Altitude Pseudo-Satellite (HAPS) Mk.I, which is a first of its kind project, is being progressed by Indian Start-Up. HAPS are completely solar powered unmanned airplanes positioned as pseudo satellites 18–20 km above the Earth in the stratosphere with capability to maintain station for days and emulate satellite performance at a local scale.



Hermes 900 MALE RPA/Drishti 10.



High Altitude Pseudo-Satellite (HAPS) Mk.I

VAYU: What is the status on helicopter upgrades for the Ka-28 and 31 AEW and when do you expect all 24 MH-60Rs to be with the IN?

CNS: Overhaul and Mid-Life Upgrade (MLU) of IN's Kamov-28 helicopters are in progress. As regards MH-60R, first nine of these helicopters have been inducted and operationalised into IN ships. In fact, these helicopters are now actively participating in various exercises, weapon firings and training of IN personnel. We are on track to receive the remaining helicopters as per envisaged timeline. These multi-role helicopters have significantly enhanced the combat capability of our fleet units.