

Opening Remarks by Shri N.S. Sisodia
Director General, IDSA
Forum on Hi-Tech Defence Innovation
IDSA, JULY 14, 2011

It gives me great pleasure to welcome our distinguished guests for the first meeting of the Forum on High-Tech Defence Innovation being organized by our Institute. It is a great honor that Air Vice Marshal Matheswaran who has taken deep interest in the issue of the indigenous development of technology has kindly agreed to inaugurate our Forum.

There is no doubt about the need to focus on this important issue. The present environment gives us hope that the goal of indigenisation of defence production and making India a base for manufacture of high technology defence products would be realised. This is because the government has proactively implemented reforms in its defence acquisitions policy, introducing greater transparency, enhancing the role of the private sector and making further improvements in the offsets regime as well as giving priority to indigenous efforts at achieving self reliance.

At the same time Indian industry has proactively entered the field. There is realisation all around that Government and industry have to work closely together, which is the international practice. Moreover, the international environment is conducive to technology transfers to India which will help in the setting up world class manufacturing facilities in our country.

I would like to also especially welcome Ambassador Prabhat Shukla, who has just returned from a distinguished assignment in Moscow, the Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Defence, and the distinguished panelists from industry, some of whom have travelled from Mumbai and other parts of India to give us the opportunity for a frank and free exchange. I'm especially happy to see that the Chief Executive Officers of Tata, Bharat Forge, the DDG of DGOF and other key industries have taken time from their busy schedules to participate at our Forum. A warm welcome to all of you.

We are hoping for an interaction between MOD and industry which will deliver a roadmap for cooperation between government and industry, to carry forward the public-private-partnership that Hon'able RM endorsed in his address at our Institute just 2 days ago.

I am equally happy to see senior representation from DRDO, the Directorate of Indigenisation of the Indian Navy, G-Fast, all proactive organisations within Government dedicated to the indigenous development of technology, and the major industry associations. I am very happy to see defence experts from the media and the Chief Executive Officer of the Foundation for Innovation and Technology Transfer of the Indian Institute of Technology participating.

Last but not least I'm happy to welcome Professor Tai Ming Cheung who has done some pioneering work on the Chinese innovation system and who can give us insights into the workings of the Chinese innovation ecosystem and also that of the United States, which should be a study in contrasts.

In India, we need to elaborate our own eco-system, but international best practices will help us make up our minds. The verdict on FDI as a facilitator of technology transfer is mixed, but clearly host government policies will shape the final outcomes. We are yet to achieve the organizational efficiency that China has, but India may have other advantages embedded in its unique pattern of development, which unaided by Government, has achieved notable successes. We would be looking forward to hear from industry in particular, where they think the competitive advantage of India lies and what strategy they would like to see adopted. Further cogitation on the offsets mechanism and technology-friendly policies is expected from the Forum, which should also yield some useful ideas on the way forward.

There are too many issues and I do not intend to go over each one of them, but I wish the deliberations all success.

Without further ado I shall now yield the floor to our distinguished colleague and Air Vice Marshal Matheswaran. Air Vice Marshal Matheswaran has had a very distinguished career and graduated from the National Defence Academy in 1973. He is Assistant Chief of Air Staff Operations (Space). He has commanded a premier Jaguar Strike Fighter Squadron and has held various key operational and staff appointments, including Commandant ASTE at Bangalore and AOC HQ MAO at Mumbai. He holds an M Sc, M Phil and Ph D from the University of Madras. He has lectured and written extensively on the subject at national and international forums. He is recipient of Presidential awards 'Ati Vishisht Seva Medal' and 'Vayu Sena Medal'. We are indeed very privileged to have you here and invite you to kindly deliver the inaugural address.