DRDO’s Ghatak Combat Drone Programme Gains Momentum

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The Defence Research and Development Organisation is accelerating the development of the Ghatak UCAV, an advanced stealth combat drone designed to strengthen India’s future air-combat capabilities.

Planned Procurement by the Indian Air Force

The Indian Air Force is expected to induct around 60 units of the Ghatak combat drone once the programme is completed. The drone will perform high-risk missions such as deep-strike attacks and suppression of enemy air defences without risking pilots.

Features of the Ghatak UCAV

The Ghatak is a stealth, jet-powered Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicle (UCAV) designed with a flying-wing configuration to reduce radar detection. It will be capable of carrying weapons internally and conducting missions such as reconnaissance, surveillance, and precision strikes in contested airspace.

The platform will be powered by a non-afterburning “Dry Kaveri” turbofan engine developed by DRDO’s Gas Turbine Research Establishment (GTRE), which aims to enhance India’s indigenous propulsion capability.

Development Progress

A scaled-down technology demonstrator known as the Stealth Wing Flying Testbed (SWiFT) has already been successfully tested to validate the flying-wing design and autonomous flight technologies required for the Ghatak

programme.

The programme was earlier known as AURA (Autonomous Unmanned Research Aircraft) and represents India's effort to develop a next-generation stealth combat drone domestically.

Key Facts

Developer: Defence Research and Development Organisation.

Full Form: UCAV – Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicle.

Project's Earlier Name: AURA (Autonomous Unmanned Research Aircraft).

Technology Demonstrator: Stealth Wing Flying Testbed (SWiFT).

Design: Flying-wing stealth configuration with low radar cross-section.

Estimated Maximum Take-Off Weight: Around 13 tonnes.

Expected Role: Deep-strike missions, surveillance, reconnaissance, and suppression of enemy air defences.

Engine: Indigenous Dry Kaveri turbofan engine under development.