Indian Army Boosts Mobility with New Light Strike Vehicle Order

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is advancing its Smart Anti-Airfield Weapon (SAAW) programme with a significant technological upgrade. The indigenously developed precision-guided glide bomb will now feature a Satellite Navigation (SATNAV) guidance system, enhancing its mid-course correction capability and improving targeting accuracy for the Indian Air Force (IAF).

Originally designed as a “fire-and-forget” weapon, the SAAW was guided by an inertial navigation system (INS) supported by GPS and Russia’s GLONASS. The integration of SATNAV will allow the weapon to adjust its flight path in real time, improving precision, adaptability, and resistance to jamming. This upgrade is expected to extend the weapon’s stand-off range and effectiveness against a wider range of targets.

Defence sources indicate that the improved system will enable the SAAW to strike not only fixed targets such as runways, aircraft shelters, and ammunition depots, but also hardened, mobile, and time-sensitive assets. The ability to make in-flight trajectory corrections will be particularly valuable in contested environments where GPS signals may be degraded or disrupted.

A key part of the enhancement is the adoption of India’s Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC) satellite system. By leveraging NavIC, DRDO aims to reduce dependence on foreign satellite networks, ensuring secure and reliable guidance. This move aligns with the

Government of India's "Aatmanirbhar Bharat" initiative, which promotes self-reliance in critical defence technologies.

The SAAW is already operational on multiple IAF platforms, including the Jaguar, Su-30MKI, and HAL Tejas aircraft. With the SATNAV upgrade, these strike aircraft will be able to operate from greater distances, reducing exposure to enemy air defences while maintaining high accuracy. Defence analysts say this could provide the IAF with a strategic advantage in high-threat operational scenarios.

Developmental trials of the SATNAV-equipped SAAW are underway, with user trials expected within the next year. If successful, the integration could boost the IAF's precision strike capability and pave the way for other indigenous advanced weapon systems, such as longer-range glide bombs and cruise missiles.

By focusing on indigenous innovation and minimising reliance on foreign technology, DRDO's work reflects India's broader goal of strengthening strategic autonomy in defence manufacturing. Once operational, the upgraded SAAW is expected to become a critical asset in India's aerial warfare capabilities, offering improved accuracy, flexibility, and survivability.