

Project Kusha: Empowering Innovation Through Sustainable Technology

In response to growing security challenges and evolving aerial threats, India is accelerating the development of its own long-range surface-to-air missile (SAM) system under **Project Kusha**, an indigenous air defence system similar to the Russian-made **S-400 Triumph**.

□□ What is Project Kusha?

Project Kusha is a cutting-edge defence initiative led by the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** with **Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)** as its key development partner. The project aims to build a state-of-the-art air defence system capable of intercepting aircraft, drones, and missiles — matching the capabilities of Russia's S-400 system.

- **Prototype deadline:** Within the next 12–18 months
- **User trials:** Expected to last another 12–36 months
- **Potential order value:** Up to ₹40,000 crore

□□ Why the Urgency?

During the recent **Operation Sindoor**, the Indian armed forces successfully utilized the S-400 system to intercept more than **300 Pakistani drones and missiles**. These threats followed precision strikes by India on terrorist camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

The Indian Air Force, in a coordinated defence effort, deployed its **Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS)**, supported by S-400s, indigenous **Akash and Samar missiles**, **Barak-8**, and advanced anti-drone tech to neutralize incoming threats.

□□ Current Status of Project Kusha

According to BEL Chairman **Manoj Jain**, the company is currently working on key subsystems including:

- Advanced radar systems
- Fire control and command systems

BEL awaits a final decision on the **system integrator**. If two integrators are chosen, BEL is poised to be one.

India's S-400 Deal and Strategic Push

India signed a \$5.4 billion deal with Russia in 2018 for five S-400 systems:

- **3 units delivered**
- **4th expected by end of 2025**
- **5th unit by 2026**

Meanwhile, **National Security Advisor Ajit Doval** is expected to attend the **13th International Security Meeting in Moscow (May 27-29)** to expedite the delivery of the remaining systems.

Other Projects by BEL

Apart from Project Kusha, BEL is also spearheading the **Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air Missile (QRSAM)** project, estimated at ₹30,000 crore. BEL is the designated production agency and has formed a dedicated team for this high-priority project.

Key Highlights of Project Kusha:

- Indigenous S-400 equivalent
- DRDO-BEL collaboration
- Strategic defence push post-Operation Sindoor
- Estimated cost: ₹40,000 crore
- Critical to India's long-term air defence autonomy

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