

Ambani and Adani in race to be No. 1 in civilian drones

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NEW DELHI: After green energy, the Ambani and Adani Groups are now in the race to become number one in yet another field - civilian-use drones. While they both have major presence in defence side drones, officials of these groups participating in the Drone Festival in Delhi last week spoke about expanding in the civil side now.

"We will be expanding in all spheres like original equipment manufacturer (OEM), services and analytics using cloud-based platforms. We aim to be the biggest OEM in India. As of now, we have one manufacturing hub in Bengaluru and will soon have maintenance hubs across India," Nihar Vartak, co-founder and director of Asteria Aerospace, which is a subsidiary of Reliance Industries' Jio Platforms, told TOI. Asteria Aerospace signed an MoU with India's biggest unmanned aerial vehicles

(UAV) pilot training company - Drone Destination - during the event to meet its requirement of licensed drone operators.

Adani Defence and Aerospace head land systems Ashok Wadhawan said, "We are promoting startups in the sector. We will soon start manufacturing a logistics drone capable of carrying a payload of up to 120kg, and then come up with drones for other payloads. The group is looking at agriculture drones and want to be the market leader."

Last Friday, Adani Defence Systems and Technologies (ADSTL) announced it will acquire 50% stake in Bengaluru-based commercial drone player General Aeronautics to provide "end-to-end solutions to domestic agriculture sector". And last month, Adani-Elbit Advanced Systems India, a JV of Adani Group and an Israeli company, was one of the 14 beneficiaries under the government's product-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for manufacturing drone and drone components.

EXPANDING PORTFOLIO

➤ Mukesh Ambani- and Gautam Adani-led groups already have **major presence in defence drones**

➤ **Asteria Aerospace, a subsidiary of Reliance Industries's Jio Platforms**, has plans to expand in spheres like original equipment manufacturer (OEM), services and analytics using cloud-based platforms

➤ **Adani Defence and Aerospace** will soon start manufacturing a logistics drone



Mukesh Ambani **Gautam Adani**

capable of carrying a payload of up to 120kg, and then come up with drones for other payloads. The group is looking at agriculture drones

➤ As of now, there are **270 drone startups in India**

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"When we entered the defence UAV side in 2018, we brought the biggest Hermes 900 multi-role, medium altitude long endurance (MALE) drone (that is made by Israeli partner Elbit Systems). Now as we enter the civil side, we will grow taking both the organic and inorganic route," Adani Group's Wadhawan said.

Reliance Group's Asteria Aerospace is a "full-stack drone technology company providing actionable intelligence from aerial data" that develops customised drone solutions using its in-house hardware design, software development, and manufacturing capabilities. Apart from defence, it is working with companies in agriculture, oil & gas, energy, telecom, mining, and construction sectors. "We are working on mega projects. Currently, we are mapping a 50,000 sq km-area in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and will complete the work in 4-5 months," Asteria's Vartak said.