

Security agencies eye Israel spy balloons

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BENGALURU: Indian security agencies such as the National Security Guard, the Border Security Force and the Karnataka police have shown interest in acquiring balloon-based aerial surveillance systems from Israel's RT, according to the Israeli company's Bengaluru-based partner Mistral Solutions.

The aerostat system, widely

The system provides surveillance images from its airborne perch

used by the Israel Defence Forces and recently purchased by the U.S. army, includes a helium balloon that is tethered to a mobile ground platform and provides surveillance images from its airborne perch.

"Mistral's forte in homeland

security solutions has encouraged us to venture into the Indian market and we have so far received some positive signals from the various security and surveillance departments in India," said Rami Shmueli, chief executive at RT.

India is expected to emerge as one of the largest players in homeland security systems by 2020, according to a report by Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India

and KPMG.

The report projects that India, along with Britain, Germany and France, will outgrow the United States, which enjoys about 35 percent of global procurement in this field. The helium-inflatable device is equipped with imaging equipment having long-range day and night-time thermal capabilities.

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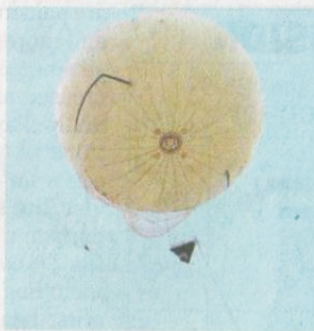
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Its camera provides aerial surveillance from a height of up to 1500 feet and can zoom in to monitor suspicious movements. The system can also provide video surveillance over a 5 km. radius. The balloon can remain airborne for up to 72 hours continuously.

Mr. Shmueli said RT's aerostat systems have been operational for a decade in various military and civilian missions and have logged more than 700,000 operation hours. "I am certain that India will greatly benefit from the use of these systems," he said.

Mistral's chairman Anees Ahmed said the product is al-



India is planning to buy Israeli spy balloons.

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so useful in emergency situations like earthquakes and floods. The other applications include surveillance of sports events, public rallies, border

and coastal areas.

"We can set up a communication system within minutes during any disaster," said Mr. Ahmed.

The product would be available in India under the brand name Mistral-RT1000. "Karnataka Police is one of the first to look into this. Bengaluru being the technology capital of the country, we may soon see this being deployed here before any other city," said Mr. Ahmed.

RT's system is designed for surveillance over fixed sites, such as military bases, temporary camps, strategic facilities and border crossing checkpoints.