



# Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle

## Why in News

Recently, the [Defence Research and Development Organisation \(DRDO\)](#) successfully flight tested the **Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle (HSTDV)**.

## Key Points

- **About:** HSTDV is an unmanned scramjet demonstration aircraft that can travel at **hypersonic speed**.
  - It uses **hypersonic air-breathing scramjet technology**.
  - The vehicle travelled its desired flight path at a velocity of six times the speed of sound i.e. **Mach 6**.
    - **Mach number:** It describes an aircraft's speed compared with the speed of sound in air, with **Mach 1 equating to the speed of sound i.e. 343 metre per second**.

## Air Breathing Engine

- Air-breathing engines use oxygen from the atmosphere in the combustion of fuel. They include the **turbojet, turboprop, ramjet, and pulse-jet**.
- This system is **lighter, efficient and cost-effective** than other systems in use.
- Worldwide efforts are on to develop the technology for **air breathing engines for satellite launch vehicles**.
  - Presently, satellites are launched into orbit by multi-staged [satellite launch vehicles](#) that can be used only once (expendable). These launch vehicles carry oxidiser along with the fuel for combustion to produce thrust.
  - A **propulsion system which can utilise the atmospheric oxygen** during their flight will considerably reduce the total propellant required to place a satellite in orbit.
  - If those vehicles are made **reusable**, the cost of launching satellites will further come down significantly.
- **Types of Air Breathing engines**
  - **Ramjet:** A ramjet is a form of air-breathing jet engine that uses the vehicle's forward motion to compress incoming air for combustion without a rotating compressor.
    - Ramjets work most efficiently at **supersonic speeds** but they are **not efficient at hypersonic speeds**.
  - **Scramjet:** A scramjet engine is an improvement over the ramjet engine as it efficiently operates at **hypersonic speeds** and allows **supersonic combustion**.
  - **Dual Mode Ramjet (DMRJ) :** A dual mode ramjet (DMRJ) is a type of jet engine where a **ramjet transforms into a scramjet over Mach 4-8 range**, which means it can efficiently operate both in **subsonic and supersonic combustion modes**.

| Speed Range     | Mach Number | Velocity in m/s |
|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Subsonic        | < 0.8       | < 274           |
| Transonic       | 0.8-1.2     | 274-412         |
| Supersonic      | 1.2-5       | 412-1715        |
| Hypersonic      | 5-10        | 1715-3430       |
| High-hypersonic | 10-25       | 3430-8507       |

- **Conducted at:** The test was conducted from **Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Launch Complex** at APJ Abdul Kalam island off the coast of Odisha.
- **Implications:** India became the fourth country to have demonstrated this technology after the **USA, Russia and China.**
  - China successfully tested its first [waverider hypersonic flight vehicle](#) in 2018.
- **Advantages:**
  - The indigenous development of the technology will boost **the development of the systems built with hypersonic vehicles** at its core.
  - It can be developed as a carrier vehicle for **long range cruise missiles** in the defence sector. This includes both **offensive and defensive hypersonic cruise missile systems,**
    - Due to its high speed, most RADARs will be **unable to detect** it. It will also be able to **penetrate most missile defence systems.**
  - This technology will be helpful in the space sector in **development of low-cost, high efficiency reusable satellites.**
- **Disadvantages:** Very high cost.
- **Background:** The DRDO started on the development of the HSTDV engine in early 2010s.
  - The [Indian Space Research Organisation](#) (ISRO) has also worked on the development of the technology and successfully tested a system in 2016.
  - DRDO [conducted a test of this system in June 2019](#) also.

## Way Forward

- The successful demonstration is certainly a significant milestone towards [Atmanirbhar Bharat](#). DRDO with this mission, has demonstrated capabilities for highly complex technology that will serve as the **building block for NextGen Hypersonic vehicles in partnership** with industries.
- While the successful test is a major milestone, **many more rounds of tests** will have to be done to achieve the level of technology with countries like the US, Russia and China.

**Source:** [TH](#)