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TATA Power Company Ltd's Rs 65-crore Strategic Electronics Division, which designs software for India's defence systems, said it hopes to achieve a ten-fold growth in the coming five years.

The company is eyeing the international defence contracts' pie and will be trying to break into the global defence market in the next five to eight years, according to a company source. The company also plans to acquire smaller defence software development companies.

When contacted, Mr Rahul Chaudhry, Chief Executive Officer, SED and Broadband divisions, said the company was looking at ``inorganic growth" in the global defence software design sub-contracting business. For this purpose, the SED division also plans to double its technical manpower during this financial year. The division currently employs 264 people. Of these, roughly 115 people are engineers or with higher technical qualifications.

Tata Power's SED has been working on electronics and software development programmes for large projects of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) since 1967. The SED began as a Research and Development unit for Tata Electric Company to work on developing systems

Its important recent contributions include designing software systems for the multi-barrel rocket launcher `Pinaka', surface-to-air missile `Aakash' and electronic warfare systems `Sanjukta' - all of which were displayed at the Republic Day parade in New Delhi.

The division has seen rapid growth in the last one-and-a-half years with turnovers jumping from Rs 15 crore to Rs 45 crore by 2002-03.

``We will now focus primarily on improving technology by investing in world-class embedded systems and real-time software on the one hand and adding technical staff on the other," Mr Chaudhry told *Business Line*. He said the company is hoping to diversify into other product lines such as building training simulators for defence establishments.

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