Nuclear-capable Agni-P missile test-fired

It has many advanced technologies and will strengthen our credible deterrence capabilities: Rajnath

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A new-generation nuclear-capable ballistic missile, Agni-P (Prime) was successfully test-fired by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Monday.

"Agni-P is a new-generation advanced variant of Agni class of missiles. It is a canisterised missile with range capability between 1,000 and 2,000 km," a DRDO statement said. The test was conducted at 10.55 a.m. from the Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam island, Balasore, off the coast of Odisha.

High accuracy

Various telemetry and radar stations positioned along the eastern coast tracked and monitored the missile, the statement said. "The missile followed textbook trajectory, meeting all mission objectives with high level of accuracy."

Congratulating the DRDO, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Twitter: "Many advanced technologies including composites, propulsion systems, innovative guidance and control mechanisms and state-of-the-art navigation systems have been introduced. The Agni-P missile would further strengthen India's credible deterrence capabilities."

Advanced variant: 'Agni Prime' being test-fired from Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam island off the coast of Odisha on Monday. ▪ PTI

Explaining the differences from the earlier Agni class of missiles, a DRDO official said Agni-P had improved parameters, including manoeuvring and accuracy. "There is a complete technology upgrade in every way."

Cuts launch time

Canisterisation of missiles reduces the time required to launch the missile while improving its storage and mobility, one defence official explained.

The Agni class of missiles are the mainstay of India's nuclear launch capability which also includes the Prithvi short-range ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles and fighter aircraft.

The longest of the Agni series, Agni-V, an Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) with a range of over 5,000 km, has already been tested several times and validated for induction.

In the past few years, India has also operationalised its submarine-based nuclear launch capability, completing the nuclear triad. This is especially important given India's no-first-use policy while reserving the right of massive retaliation if struck with nuclear weapons first.

As reported by *The Hindu* earlier, the DRDO, in January 2020, successfully test-fired a 3,500-km range submarine-launched ballistic missile, K-4, from a submerged pontoon off the Visakhapatnam coast.

Once inducted, these missiles will be the mainstay of the Arihant class of indigenous ballistic missile nuclear submarines (SSBN) and will give India the stand-off capability to launch nuclear weapons submerged in Indian waters.

INS Arihant, the only SSBN in service, is armed with K-15 missiles with a range of 750 km.