

DRDO Gears up for Canister Launch of Agni-V

BALASORE: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is preparing for the second canisterised launch of India's most potent home-grown surface-to-surface nuclear capable missile Agni-V. Sources said preparations have begun at the Abdul Kalam Island test facility for the test scheduled in the last week of February. As the missile has to traverse across the Indian Ocean, all logistic issues are to be fixed prior to the launch. The missile has a strike range of more than 5,000 km, the longest one in the arsenal. A defence official associated with the mission said since Agni-V is a complex system and the attempt is to fire it from a canister, scientists are on the job to achieve greater accuracy. "The missile will be fired from the confines of its canister, a hermetically-sealed airtight container mounted on a road-mobile Tatra truck," he said. According to DRDO, the missile is among the best in its class in the world with its advanced ring-laser gyros, composite rocket motors and highly accurate micro-navigation systems and inertial navigation systems. As Agni-V incorporates advanced technologies involving ring laser gyroscope and accelerometer for navigation and guidance, its accuracy level is far higher than 700-km range Agni-I, 2,000-km range Agni-II and 3,000-km range Agni-III. The canister-launch system will give the armed forces the requisite operational flexibility to promptly transport the ballistic missile and launch it from a place of their choice. The DRDO is also working on the canister version of other Agni series of missiles including Agni-I, Agni-III and Agni-IV, the official informed. So far three tests of Agni-V, including one canister version, have been conducted. The missile will be inducted in the armed forces after two to three more tests. "The next focus will be more on multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRVs) and manoeuvring warheads to defeat enemy ballistic missile defence systems," said a DRDO scientist. With MIRV features each missile can be capable of carrying two to 10 separate nuclear warheads and each warhead can be assigned to a different target, hundreds of kms away from each other and alternatively, two or more warheads can be assigned to one target. Developed by the DRDO, the intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) Agni-V can target all of Asia and parts of Africa and Europe. It is part of the Agni series of missiles developed under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP). The three-stage, 17-metre tall, two-metre wide Agni-V, weighing 50 tonnes, is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead of about 1.5 tonnes. Capable of destroying enemy satellites, this missile flies at a speed of Mach 24.