

'Final' Agni-V canister test to be conducted soon, PM Modi may attend missile trial

Indian defence research and development labs are gearing up for the canister test launch of Agni-V missile, a nuclear-tipped surface-to-surface Inter-continental range Ballistic Missile (ICBM) with a possible operational range of over 5,000 km, on March 15.

This could most likely be the last of the developmental trials for the most powerful Agni series missile before being operationalised in 2017, the New Indian Express reported, citing sources.

Moreover, the test launch could be witnessed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar, following an invitation from the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

The test will be conducted from the missile testing facility in the Abdul Kalam Island (earlier known as Wheeler Island).

India joined the U.S., Russia, the U.K., France and China, who boast ICBM capabilities, when it tested its first Agni-V missile in 2012.

It is a three stage solid fuel missile that is capable of carrying 1.5 tonnes of nuclear warhead. The report noted that Agni-V showcases advanced technologies such as ring laser gyroscope and accelerometer for navigation and guidance.

It has a greater accuracy than its predecessors and the canister version brings flexibility to the weapon system.

Agni-V is billed as India's answer to the Chinese DF-26 Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM).

Moreover, it can be equipped with multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRV), which can carry multiple warheads for different targets.

The report claimed that DRDO is also working on the integration of long-range missiles with MIRV with six to ten warheads. Previously, a DRDO scientist was quoted as saying by the New Indian Express that MIRVs are the "next focus."

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Agni-V Canister Version Ready to Roar into Sky

BALASORE: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is gearing up for the canister version test of most potent surface-to-surface Inter-continental range Ballistic Missile (ICBM) Agni-V. The longest range nuclear capable missile is likely to be test-fired from a defence test facility off the Odisha coast on March 15.

Pre-launch preparations are on at Abdul Kalam Island (formerly Wheeler Island). The test could be the missile's last developmental trial and the outcome assumes significance as the weapon system is likely to be operationalised next year.

Sources said the DRDO has invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar to witness the missile launch.

While Agni-V is a complex system, its test from a canister makes it even more complicated given the involvement of a variety of sophisticated and high-end tracking systems to capture data for the full operational range. Since the first test of the missile in 2012, the missile has undergone several upgradation. It has become more stable, fast reacting and agile with quick response time.

A defence scientist associated with the missile development said the new canister-launcher has been built uniquely so that the missile can respond within minutes of command. A gas generator at the bottom of the canister pushes off the missile before its first stage is ignited and missile roars into the sky.

The canister version makes any weapon system more flexible and fastens the mobility of a huge system like Agni-V. The missile also can be launched from a truck-mounted canister.

The three-stage, 17-metre tall, two-metre wide Agni-V, weighing around 50 tonnes, is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead of about 1.5 tonnes to a distance of more than 5,000 km. As it incorporates advanced technologies involving ring laser gyroscope and accelerometer for navigation and guidance, its accuracy level is far higher than its three earlier variants - Agni-I, Agni-II and Agni-III.

What makes the missile more effective and stealth is that it can be equipped with Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicles (MITRV) capable of delivering multiple warheads at different targets at long distances. The DRDO is now working on integrating the long range missiles with MITRV capable of incorporating six to 10 warheads.