

BrahMos missile with higher range: This ‘killer’ India-Russia project will scare Pakistan and China

India and Russia have decided to build a BrahMos missile with a significantly enhanced range.

India’s defence arsenal is all set to get a major boost in the coming years with several key deals being signed. The latest big development that will add tremendously to India’s firepower and strike capability is the decision to build a BrahMos missile with a significantly enhanced range. The confirmation for the same came when Russian President Vladimir Putin talked of the intent to increase BrahMos’ range, during an interaction with Russia’s journalists. “We have also agreed to improve the BrahMos missile, which will be land-, air- and sea-launched. We will also work to increase its range,” Putin said during his interaction after the annual Russia-India summit on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit.

Sources told FE Online that BrahMos Aerospace, that is the India-Russia JV behind the missile, is yet to receive details of the agreement. They, however, confirmed that the plan to develop the missile is in works and the range would be significantly better than the current 290-km. The BrahMos range had been less than 300 km because India was not a part of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). But with India now a part of MTCR, Russia can jointly develop a missile with higher range. This development also assumes significance in the backdrop of India’s growing tensions with Pakistan and China. A greater range for BrahMos would imply that India’s power to strike would get an unprecedented fillip.

Says Avinash Chander, Former DRDO chief and the man behind India’s Agni missiles, “The BrahMos missile is unique in its class. Similiar missiles of neighbouring countries have a range of up to 280 km, whereas BrahMos in its current form has a 290 km range. With an enhanced ranged – some reports even suggest 600 km – India will get the huge potential to strike deep into the neighbouring territories, be it Pakistan or China. In fact it would cover the entire Pakistan.” “Not only that, you can easily target the vital assets of the enemy and the BrahMos missile has very high accuracy. In my view it will add a lot of teeth to the armed forces capability and you can easily break down the communications of the enemy’s border units with the back-end support,” Avinash Chander told FE Online.

Air Vice Marshal Manmohan Bahadur VM (Retd) and a Distinguished Fellow, CAPS sees India getting a commendable boost. “It is true that the range of BrahMos can be extended from the existing number, it is structurally possible. I am not sure whether MTCR was the real deterrent for Russia. If it wanted it could have easily developed an over 300 km range missile with India. The advanced missile will give India a greater land strike capability. Pakistan will now have to protect its assets even more,” he told FE Online, adding that “from the perspective of the Navy, it means that you can now place your ships much farther from the land.”

Manmohan Bahadur believes that an air version for the advanced BrahMos will be difficult to integrate. “As far as the IAF goes, I am not sure how easy it will be to integrate such a heavy and big missile onto an aircraft. Already the Sukhoi to BrahMos integration required changes to be made in the aircraft. But, a BrahMos with a greater range would definitely be a big boost for India,” he said.

So, how long will it take to develop the new missile? Given that India already has the required infrastructure in place, experts feel that the time would be reasonable compared to what it takes to develop an entirely new platform. “We already have the infrastructure to develop the BrahMos missile and extending the range is not a big job because it requires changing the engine capacity and some other modifications,” Avinash Chander said. “If the pact is signed now, it should take around 3 years for India to develop the advanced version of BrahMos,” he added. or the uninitiated, BrahMos is the world’s fastest anti-ship cruise missile, and has already caught the attention of a number of countries who wish to purchase it. In its current form, the BrahMos has a

maximum velocity of 2.8 Mach and cruises at altitudes varying from 10 metres to 15 km. It can be launched in either inclined or vertical configuration based on the type of the ship.

The land-attack version of BrahMos is fitted on an mobile autonomous launcher. BrahMos is also capable of being launched from submarine from a depth of 40-50 metres. In 2013, it was successfully launched from a submerged platform. The BrahMos air-launched version will soon be test-fired from the Su-30MKI fighter of the IAF. Meanwhile, a new version of BrahMos with a compact engine that can reach speed of Mach 3.3 is already in works.