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India successfully test fires nuclear capable Agni-III missile off Odisha coast

Bhubaneswar: Indian army on Thursday successfully test-fired surface-to-surface intermediate range ballistic missile (IRBM) Agni-III from a defence test facility off Odisha coast.

Defence sources said, the indigenously built highly sophisticated missile blasted off from a mobile launcher at the launching complex-IV of Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Abdul Kalam Island at about 9.15 am.

While the test was carried out by the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) of army, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) provided logistic support. The trial was conducted as part of its user training exercise.

Scientists and Army personnel who were closely monitoring the trajectory and flight path of the missile at the mission control room went into raptures as the missile rose majestically into the sky, travelling in the pre-coordinated projectile.

Propelled by two-stage solid propellant, the missile took off vertically into space and re-entered the atmosphere after attaining a height of nearly 500 km. Even though it did not carry a live warhead, its nuclear triggering mechanism worked well.

“The trial has met all mission objectives and all the events have occurred as expected. Terminal phase events were recorded by down range ship deployed near the impact point. The test once again proved the reliability of the state-of-the-art technologies and readiness of the user to launch it,” said an official from New Delhi.

The missile used in the test was picked up randomly from the production lot. The missile reached the pre-defined target with an accuracy of less than 100m upon its launch. The missile equipped with state-of-the-art avionics and advanced on board computer, has the latest features to correct and guide in-flight disturbances.

The missile's trajectory was monitored through various telemetry stations, electro-optic systems and sophisticated radars located along the coast and by two naval ships anchored near the impact point.

Agni-III, capable of carrying both conventional and nuclear warheads weighing up to 1.5 tonnes, is 17 m tall. It has a diameter of two meter it weighs around 50 tonnes with warhead which is protected by carbon composite heat shield.

Prior to the test, a cautionary notice was issued to aviators and mariners to keep away from the area of splashdown in the sea.