

Phethai clouds Pralay test in Odisha's Abdul Kalam Island

*The missile's maiden trial was deferred by DRDO due to inclement weather
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Bhubaneswar: Cyclone Phethai has cast a shadow on the maiden trial of newly developed surface-to-surface tactical missile 'Pralay'. The trial of the missile was recently deferred by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

Defence sources said all arrangements were in place for the flight test of the weapon system from Abdul Kalam Island. Despite several attempts on Monday and Tuesday, the mission team had to postpone it owing to inclement weather conditions and rough sea.

As per the earlier schedule, Navigational Area (Navarea) was issued on the Bay of Bengal and north east Indian Ocean for the developmental flight trial of the missile from Integrated Test Range (ITR) between 2.30 pm and 6.30 pm. "As the launching complex witnessed overcast sky and sporadic rainfall, the test has been postponed. Collection of data of any missile's first test is as much important as its design. It is difficult to get exact data in such climate conditions. If weather permits, the missile will be test fired any time between December 23 and 24," said a senior defence official.

Though several user trials of missiles have been conducted earlier in such conditions to gauge their all-weather performances, the DRDO reportedly did not take any risk in this case as it was the first experimental trial of Pralay which is a conventional tactical missile system.

"Defence scientists are optimistic about the weapon system as it has the capability to outperform China's Dongfeng 12 and Russia's 9K720 Iskande tactical missiles. The success would pave way for a series of developmental trials next year before being handed over to the armed forces," the officials added. Sanctioned in March 2015, the missile is a derivative of Prithvi Defence Vehicle (PDV) exo-atmospheric interceptor which is capable of destroying enemy weapons at high altitudes.

With a payload of one tonne, the missile can strike targets 350 km away. It can travel up to 500 km if the payload is halved. Flying at a faster speed than conventional missiles in its class, the five tonne missile can evade any ballistic missile defence system. Having a strike range similar to short range ballistic missile Prithvi, the indigenously developed weapon system has the capability to surprise enemy in any battlefield condition. Propelled by solid-fuel rocket, the missile will be launched from its own canister-based transporter erector launcher.

<http://www.newindianexpress.com/states/odisha/2018/dec/19/phethai-clouds-pralay-test-1913604.html>