

**ISLAMABAD** ♦ Pakistan on Monday embarked on a ballistic missile exercise for the ongoing year, with a successful test fire of short-range surface-to-surface ballistic missile Hatf-IX [NASR] ♦ less than two years after the missile had become operational.

{loadposition content\_adsense300}The test fire was conducted with successive launches of two missiles from a state-of-the-art multi-tube launcher. NASR, with a range of 60 km, and in-flight maneuver capability could carry nuclear warheads of appropriate yield, with high accuracy, an Inter-Services Public Relations statement says.

This quick response system, which can fire a four-missile salvo ensures deterrence against threats in view of the evolving scenarios. Additionally NASR has been specially designed to defeat all known anti-tactical missile defence systems, adds the statement.

According to official sources, the test was part of the short-range surface-to-surface ballistic missile [SRBMs] and medium-range ballistic missiles [MRBM] exercise that is set to be completed in three cycles by July this year.

Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Khalid Shameem Wynne, who witnessed the event, congratulated senior military officers, scientists and engineers of the strategic organisations on displaying a high standard of proficiency in handling and operating the state-of-the-art weapon system. Wynne said the armed forces were fully capable of safeguarding the country's security against all kinds of aggression.

Strategic Technology Resources Chief Executive Officer Dr Shireen Mazari said the testing of the ballistic missile was a significant and well-timed move.

In strategic terms, Mazari said, India's ♦cold start♦ doctrine had now been rejected in name and it sustained conceptually and simply reformulated as various war-fighting formulations demonstrated in ♦our military exercises envisaged the use of rapid deployment of armed brigades and divisions in surprise; rapid attacks directly undermined Pakistan's ability to rationalise a one-rung escalation ladder as it now lacked credibility♦.

She termed NASR as counter to India's limited war doctrine. "That NASR has not yet been inducted allows both the countries to bring the issue of doctrines to the table of a strategic dialogue, along with the other issues."

Elaborating on the technical specifications, Mazari said NASR was so far a technology-demonstrative missile. "We are signaling our acquisition of tactical missile capability and miniaturisation technology. This will allow our already developed cruise missiles - the Hatf-VIII [Ra'ad] which is an air-launched cruise missile [ALCM] and Hatf-VII [Babur], which is a ground-launched cruise missile [GLCM] - to be miniaturised for sea-launched submarine capability in order to move on to a second-strike capability. This would help stabilise the nuclear deterrence and its credibility," she said.

According to Mazari, the dynamics of maintaining a credible minimum nuclear deterrence altered with the Indo-US nuclear deal and its fallout, especially India's enhanced weapons grade fissile stockpiles.

"India's development of a missile defence capability also directly impacted Pakistan's nuclear deterrence. Our cruise missiles are critical because they can fly under the radar or missile defence shield."

The test event was also witnessed by Strategic Plans Division Director General Lieutenant-General (retired) Khalid Ahmed Kidwai, NESCOM Chairman Muhammad Irfan Burney, Commander Army Strategic Forces Command Lieutenant-General Tariq Nadeem Gilani, senior officers from the armed forces and scientists and engineers of the strategic organisations. President Zardari and Prime Minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf meanwhile congratulated the scientists and engineers on their outstanding success.

Earlier on January 27, Pakistan's archrival India conducted a successful test of K-15, a nuclear-capable submarine-launched ballistic missile [SLBM], a technologically-advanced underwater missile.

Also known as a multi-tube ballistic missile [MTBM], Hatf-IX was brought into operational phase following its first successful test on

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April 19, 2011. A single missile was set off from the multi tube-launcher then. The use of two missiles in Monday's test was done to evaluate the 'technological strength' of the missile, the sources said, adding that the simultaneous launch of two missiles from the multi tube-launcher was only possible if an advanced level of technological efficacy was developed.

Courtesy: The Nation