

## **Pakistan's nuclear arsenal not against anyone: Nawaz Sharif**

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**Islamabad:** Seeking to ease Indo-Pak tensions after a war of words, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif today said Pakistan's nuclear weapons were "not against anyone" and asserted that his country would maintain minimum credible deterrence for strategic stability in South Asia.

Sharif's remarks came as he chaired the meeting of National Command Authority, the apex body in-charge of the strategic weapons of the country.

The meeting agreed that Pakistan seeks peace and strategic stability in South Asia as cornerstone of its policy and it considers conflict resolution as the means to achieve this objective, Radio Pakistan reported. Sharif said that Pakistan would maintain minimum credible deterrence for the sake of strategic stability in the region.

He said the nuclear weapons were "not against anyone", Dawn newspaper quoted him as saying. The meeting also said Pakistan will adhere to the policy of avoiding an arms race in the region. Sharif's comments came amid heightened tensions between India and Pakistan along the LoC.

Indian army chief General Dalbir Singh had said that India is prepared for short wars. In response, Pakistan army chief General Raheel Sharif had warned India of "unbearable damage" in case of a "long or short" misadventure by the "enemy".

During today's meeting, Director General Strategic Plans Division (SPD) Lieutenant General Mazhar Jamil briefed the participants about the security and safety of Pakistan's nuclear weapons.

He said that a security force of 30,000 is safeguarding the strategic arsenal. Official sources said that Sharif was satisfied with the security of the nuclear weapons. NCA reaffirmed the resolve to maintain full spectrum deterrence capability to deter all forms of aggression.

The meeting said that Pakistan is a responsible nuclear country.

It said Pakistan is determined to play its role with reference to nuclear non-proliferation.

Pakistan believes in resolution of conflicts through negotiations, it said.

Earlier, a report by US think-tanks said that Pakistan was on course of having about 350 nuclear weapons in about a decade, the world's third-largest stockpile after the US and Russia and twice that of India.

- PTI