

India has fissile material for 2,000 warheads, assesses Pakistan

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Islamabad: Pakistan has assessed that India has enough fissile material for more than 2,000 warheads, a media report said on Thursday.

The National Command Authority (NCA) on Wednesday concluded that India's growing nuclear programme and absence of a conflict resolution mechanism were upsetting strategic stability in the region and the situation was forcing Pakistan to maintain "full-spectrum deterrence capability", reported Dawn.

Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said that the apex policy-making body for the country's strategic programme reviewed in its meeting the regional security environment and was briefed on fast-paced strategic and conventional capability developments taking place in the neighbourhood.

The media report said that contrary to international estimates, Pakistani assessment is that India has enough fissile material, both reactor- and weapon-grade plutonium, for more than 2,000 warheads.

International Institute of Strategic Studies noted in a paper: "New Delhi's plutonium stocks also continue to pile up; according to one Pakistani assessment, by the end of 2013 India had produced enough weapons- and reactor-grade plutonium (0.8-1tn and 15tn respectively) for 2,000 warheads."

The meeting was presided over by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and attended by Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar, Adviser on National Security and Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee Chairman General Rashad Mehmood, the three services chiefs and the director general of the strategic plans division.

Dawn cited US think tanks Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Stimson Centre as saying that Pakistan had the fastest growing nuclear programme and could have the third largest nuclear stockpile within five to 10 years.

The NCA meeting comes amid shelling at the border with India and a day ahead of talks between Pakistani Rangers and India's Border Security Force (BSF) chiefs in New Delhi.

Saying that there are no estimates available on Indian missile inventories, the media report said that concerns expressed by the NCA pertained to India's growing strategic capabilities in the form of new weapon systems, including submarine-launchable intercontinental and medium-range ballistic missiles and improvements in its ballistic missile defence.

The NCA also noted with concern India's rapidly expanding conventional military asymmetry and dangerous limited conventional war policy called Cold Start doctrine.

"The NCA re-affirmed that the state remains fully cognisant of the evolving security dynamics of South Asia and will take all measures to safeguard its national security," the military's public relations wing said.

It said the NCA resolved to maintain full-spectrum deterrence capability in line with the dictates of credible minimum deterrence against all forms of aggression.

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