

'We are partners, not rivals': China on India's Agni-V test

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New Delhi: Reacting to India's testing of the nuclear-capable Agni-5 intercontinental ballistic missile, China today said that the two countries are "not rivals but partners".

China's reaction came in wake of some media reports suggesting that India's successful test of Agni-V was meant to target China.

China also expressed hope that India's test complied with UN Security Council rules and safeguarded South Asia's strategic balance.

"On your question on India test firing the Agni-V ballistic missile, we have noted relevant reports. On whether India can develop this ballistic missile that can carry nuclear weapons, I think relevant resolutions of the UNSC have clear rules," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said.

"We have always believed that safeguarding strategic balance and stability in South Asia is conducive for the peace and prosperity of countries in the region," she added.

The strategic balance in South Asia apparently referred to the military balance between India and Pakistan.

Agni-5, a 5,000-km range intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) is widely regarded as a strategic missile targeted at China as it can reach almost all parts of the Chinese mainland.

Hua also criticised media reports in India and outside referring to the Agni-5 as targeted at China and aimed at correcting India's strategic balance with Beijing.

"On the test firing by India, we have also noted that some media, including Indian media and also some Japanese media, have speculated on whether this act of India is targeted at China," she said.

"I think, as to India's intentions, you have to ask the Indian side," she said adding that India and China are not rivals but partners.

"As for us, we think that the leaders of China and India have an important consensus which is that China and India are both important developing countries and emerging economies," she said.

"China and India are not rivals but partners. The Chinese side is willing to work with countries in the region including India to jointly safeguard lasting peace, prosperity and stability of the region," she further said and asked media to report more objectively.

"We also hope that relevant media outlets do not indulge in arbitrary speculations and make objective reports and do more things conducive to developing mutual trust between China and India and peace and stability in the region," she said.

Experts say that proven ICBM capability currently exists only with the five major powers - the US, Russia, France, the UK and China.

Russia's land-based Satan missile can reach 16,000 kms, while China has ICBMs that can hit targets up to 13,000 kms.

While India is part of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), China is not.

- (With PTI inputs)