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India Test-Fires Agni-1 Ballistic Missile from Chandipur

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India Test-Fires Agni-1 Ballistic Missile from Chandipur

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WHY IN NEWS:

India successfully test-launched the short-range ballistic missile **Agni-1** from the **Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur**, Odisha on **May 22, 2026**. The launch was conducted by the **Strategic Forces Command (SFC)** and validated all operational and technical parameters. The periodic user trial confirms continued operational readiness of the system in India's nuclear arsenal.

ABOUT AGNI-1

Technical Profile

PARAMETER	SPECIFICATION
Class	Short-Range Ballistic Missile (SRBM)
Range	700-1,200 km
Configuration	Single-stage, solid-fuelled
Mobility	Road and rail-mobile (TEL — Transporter-Erector-Launcher)
Payload	Up to ~1,000 kg; conventional or nuclear-capable
First inducted	2007
Developer	DRDO (under IGMDP)

Agni-1 was developed to fill the operational gap between the **Prithvi** series (150-350 km) and **Agni-2** (~2,000 km). Its solid-fuel configuration provides **rapid launch readiness** and **higher survivability** compared to liquid-fuelled predecessors.

THE AGNI SERIES — COMPARISON

MISSILE	RANGE	STAGES / FUEL	YEAR INDUCTED	KEY FEATURE
Agni-1	700-1,200 km	Single-stage, solid	2007	SRBM, road/rail mobile
Agni-2	~2,000 km	Two-stage, solid	2004	MRBM
Agni-3	~3,500 km	Two-stage, solid	2011	IRBM
Agni-4	~4,000 km	Two-stage, solid	2014	Lighter, road-mobile IRBM
Agni-5	>5,000 km	Three-stage, solid	2018	ICBM-class; MIRV via Mission Divyastra (March 11, 2024)
Agni-Prime (Agni-P)	1,000-2,000 km	Two-stage, solid	Under induction	MaRV-capable; replaces Agni-1/Agni-2
Agni-6 (planned)	>10,000 km	Multi-stage	Under development	Heavy ICBM

Mission Divyastra on March 11, 2024 was India's first successful flight test of Agni-5 with **Multiple Independently-targetable Re-entry Vehicles (MIRV)** capability — joining a select club (US, Russia, UK, France, China) with this technology.

INTEGRATED TEST RANGE (ITR), CHANDIPUR

- Located in **Balasore district, Odisha**, along the **Bay of Bengal**
- Operational since **1989**
- Premier facility for testing tactical and strategic missile systems
- Houses **Launch Complex (LC)-III, LC-IV, LC-V** among others
- Adjacent to **Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Island** (formerly Wheeler Island) — used for longer-range strategic launches

INTEGRATED GUIDED MISSILE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (IGMDP)

- **Launched: 1983**

- **Father of the programme:** Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam (then DRDO chief)
- **Officially completed:** January 8, 2008
- **Five missile programmes:**

MISSILE	TYPE
Prithvi	SRBM (surface-to-surface)
Agni	IRBM / ICBM family
Akash	Medium-range SAM
Trishul	Short-range SAM
Nag	Third-generation ATGM

STRATEGIC FORCES COMMAND (SFC)

- Established on **January 4, 2003** under the **Nuclear Command Authority (NCA)**
- Headquartered in **New Delhi**
- Tri-service formation managing India's land-, sea- and air-based nuclear arsenal
- Headed by a three-star officer (rotational among Army, Navy, IAF)
- **NCA chaired by the Prime Minister**, advised by the Political Council and Executive Council

INDIA'S NUCLEAR DOCTRINE (2003)

Adopted by the **Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS)** in **January 2003**, the doctrine rests on the following pillars:

- 1 **Credible Minimum Deterrent (CMD)**
- 2 **No-First-Use (NFU)** – first formalised in 2003
- 3 **Massive retaliation** to inflict unacceptable damage
- 4 **Civilian political control** over nuclear weapons (via NCA)
- 5 **Continued moratorium on nuclear testing** (since **Pokhran-II, May 1998** – **Operation Shakti**)
- 6 Commitment to **global, verifiable nuclear disarmament**

COMPARISON WITH ADVERSARIES' SYSTEMS

COUNTRY	NOTABLE SRBM/IRBM	RANGE	DOCTRINE
Pakistan	Shaheen-I	750 km	Full-Spectrum Deterrence; rejects NFU
	Shaheen-II	2,500 km	
	Ababeel	2,200 km	MIRV claimed
China	DF-21	1,500-2,150 km	Declared NFU (with caveats)
	DF-26	4,000 km	
	DF-31 / DF-41	10,000+ km	
India	Agni-1	700-1,200 km	NFU; CMD
	Agni-5 (MIRV)	>5,000 km	

STRATEGIC CONTEXT: POST-OPERATION SINDOOR

Following **Operation Sindoor (May 2025)** – India’s calibrated strikes against terror infrastructure across the LoC and IB – periodic Agni-class trials serve as **credibility signalling** to adversaries. Routine user trials demonstrate **continued operational readiness** of India’s strategic deterrent without escalating tensions.

KEY DRDO LABORATORIES INVOLVED

LABORATORY	ROLE
ASL (Advanced Systems Laboratory), Hyderabad	Agni missile system development
RCI (Research Centre Imarat), Hyderabad	Navigation, guidance, control
DRDL (Defence Research and Development Laboratory), Hyderabad	Propulsion and systems integration
IITR Chandipur	Test range infrastructure

UPSC RELEVANCE

- **GS Paper 3 – Defence:** India’s missile arsenal, deterrence posture, indigenous defence R&D
- **GS Paper 3 – Science & Technology:** Solid-fuel propulsion, MIRV, MaRV technologies
- **GS Paper 3 – Internal & External Security:** Nuclear doctrine, NCA, SFC

- **Prelims:** IGMDP missiles, Agni series ranges, ITR location, Mission Divyastra, NCA structure
- **Mains:** Examine the evolution of India's nuclear doctrine since 1998 and the role of the Agni series in operationalising credible minimum deterrence

FACTS CORNER

Agni-1: SRBM, range 700-1,200 km, single-stage solid-fuelled

Test date: May 22, 2026

Launch site: Integrated Test Range, Chandipur, Balasore district, Odisha

Conducted by: Strategic Forces Command (SFC)

SFC established: January 4, 2003 under Nuclear Command Authority

NCA chair: Prime Minister

IGMDP launched: 1983 (under Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam)

IGMDP missiles: Prithvi, Agni, Akash, Trishul, Nag

IGMDP officially completed: January 8, 2008

Mission Divyastra (Agni-5 MIRV): March 11, 2024

India's nuclear doctrine (2003 CCS): NFU, CMD, massive retaliation, civilian control

Pokhran-II (Operation Shakti): May 11 and 13, 1998

Agni-Prime: Next-generation replacement for Agni-1 and Agni-2

Sources: [PIB](#), [DRDO](#), [Ministry of Defence](#)

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