

Outpacing India, Pakistan may get 3rd largest nuclear arsenal: Report

28/08/2015 13:11 by admin

Washington: Far outpacing India in the development of nuclear warheads, Pakistan could have at least 350 nuclear weapons within a decade, making it the world's third largest nuclear arsenal, according to a new report.

Pakistan may be building 20 nuclear warheads annually, according to the report by two American think tanks, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Stimson Centre.

Analysts estimate Pakistan currently has 120 nuclear heads while India has around 100, the Washington Post said in a despatch from Islamabad ahead of the report's release Thursday.

But in the coming years, Islamabad's advantage could grow dramatically because it has a large stockpile of highly enriched uranium that could be used to quickly produce low-yield nuclear devices, it said.

India has far larger stockpiles of plutonium, which is needed to produce high-yield warheads, than Pakistan does.

But the report as cited by the Post said India appears to be using most of its plutonium to produce domestic energy.

Pakistan could have at least 350 nuclear weapons within five to 10 years, the report concluded. It then would probably possess more nuclear weapons than any country except the US and Russia, which each have thousands of the bombs.

"The growth path of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, enabled by existing infrastructure, goes well beyond the assurances of credible minimal deterrence provided by Pakistani officials and analysts after testing nuclear devices," the report said.

France has about 300 warheads and Britain has about 215, according to the Federation of American Scientists cited by the Post. China has approximately 250.

Pakistan is believed to use plutonium as well as highly-enriched uranium to create nuclear warheads, according to the report written by Toby Dalton, co-director of the Carnegie Endowment's Nuclear Policy Programme, and Michael Krepon, co-founder of the Stimson Centre.

"We assume, maybe correctly, maybe inaccurately, with the fuel coming out of the four reactors, they are processing it as rapidly as possible to get the plutonium out," Dalton was quoted as saying by the Post.

India views nuclear weapons "as a political tool, a prestige item, not something you use on a battlefield", Krepon said.

On the other hand, in Pakistan, nuclear weapons are seen as "things you have to be willing to use" to guarantee stability, he said.

But Krepon and Dalton said there is still time for Pakistan to slow down the development of its nuclear arsenal.

If it does, they said, the international community should consider what steps it can take to recognize it as a responsible nuclear state.

- IANS