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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

INS Taragiri and India's Blue-Water Ambitions — Project 17A and Naval Indigenisation

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26 March 2026

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 Hindustan Times

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INTERVIEW ANGLE

"India aims for a 175-ship Navy by 2035 but currently has ~130. What are the key bottlenecks in naval shipbuilding and how does Project 17A address them?"

WHY IN NEWS

The Indian Navy announced that stealth frigate INS Taragiri (F41), the fourth ship of the Nilgiri-class (Project 17A), will be commissioned on April 3, 2026. Simultaneously, DRDO successfully tested the ADC-150 air-droppable container from a P-8I aircraft off Goa.

The Editorial Argument

Hindustan Times argues that INS Taragiri's commissioning represents more than a new warship — it validates India's naval indigenisation model where over 75% indigenous content, 200+ MSME suppliers, and modular construction techniques are creating a self-sustaining shipbuilding ecosystem. The editorial calls for extending this model to submarine and aircraft carrier programmes.

Project 17A — The Nilgiri-Class Programme

Project 17A is the Indian Navy's most ambitious surface combatant programme, designed entirely by the Directorate of Naval Design (DND):

FEATURE	DETAIL
Class	Nilgiri-class stealth frigates
Total ships	7 (4 at MDL Mumbai + 3 at GRSE Kolkata)
Displacement	6,670 tonnes
Length	~149 metres
Indigenous content	Exceeds 75%
Design	Directorate of Naval Design (DND), Indian Navy
Cost	~Rs 48,000 crore for all 7 ships
Key feature	Integrated Construction Methodology (modular blocks)

Ship Status

SHIP	BUILDER	STATUS
INS Nilgiri (F39)	MDL Mumbai	Commissioned August 2024
INS Udaygiri (F40)	MDL Mumbai	Commissioned 2025
INS Dunagiri	GRSE Kolkata	Under sea trials
INS Taragiri (F41)	MDL Mumbai	Commissioning April 3, 2026
Ship 5	GRSE Kolkata	Under construction
Ship 6	MDL Mumbai	Under construction
Ship 7	GRSE Kolkata	Under construction

Stealth Features

The Nilgiri-class incorporates comprehensive stealth technology:

- **Reduced Radar Cross Section (RCS):** Sloped superstructure, enclosed mast, internal weapon storage
- **IR signature suppression:** Engine exhaust cooling systems reduce thermal signature
- **Acoustic quieting:** Raft-mounted machinery reduces underwater noise — critical for anti-submarine operations
- **Electromagnetic emission control:** Integrated communications suite minimises electronic signature

Weapons and Sensors

SYSTEM	DETAIL
Anti-ship	BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles (Mach 2.8, 450+ km range)
Air defence	Barak-8 LRSAM (70 km range; joint India-Israel development)
Anti-submarine	Torpedo tubes, rocket launchers, towed array sonar
Guns	76mm Super Rapid Gun Mount (SRGM)
Helicopter	Deck and hangar for MH-60R Seahawk
Radar	Multi-function surveillance radar; 3D air surveillance

The Indigenisation Model

Project 17A's significance lies in its supply chain architecture:

- **200+ Indian MSMEs** supply components — from hull steel to electronic warfare suites
- **Modular construction:** Ship assembled from pre-fabricated blocks (Integrated Construction Methodology) — reduces build time by 30%
- **Concurrent construction:** MDL and GRSE build ships simultaneously using the same design — first time in Indian naval history
- **Technology transfer:** BrahMos (India-Russia JV), Barak-8 (India-Israel JV) demonstrate successful defence co-development

ADC-150 — Logistics Innovation

The ADC-150 air-droppable container tested alongside the Taragiri announcement addresses a critical operational gap:

FEATURE	DETAIL
Payload	Up to 150 kg
Delivery platform	P-8I Neptune maritime patrol aircraft
Purpose	Resupply warships at sea without port calls
Developers	NSTL (Visakhapatnam) + ADRDE (Agra)
Certification	CEMILAC (Bengaluru)

This capability is essential for sustained naval operations in the Indian Ocean Region — especially during the current heightened deployment in the Arabian Sea and Gulf of Aden.

The 175-Ship Target

India aims for a 175-warship navy by 2035 (current strength: ~130). Key programmes:

PROGRAMME	SHIPS	STATUS
Project 17A (Nilgiri-class frigates)	7	2 commissioned, 5 in progress
Project 75 (Scorpene submarines)	6	5 commissioned, 1 in trials
Project 75(I) (conventional submarines)	6	RFP issued; MDL-ThyssenKrupp shortlisted
Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC-2)	1	Design phase
Next-gen destroyers (Project 18)	—	Conceptual stage
Mine Counter-Measure Vessels	12	GRSE building

Make in India in Defence — Broader Context

Defence indigenisation has accelerated under the positive indigenisation lists:

- **5 positive indigenisation lists** notified by MoD (2021-2025)
- **411 items** banned from import — must be sourced domestically
- **Defence production value (2024-25):** Rs 1.27 lakh crore (record)
- **Defence exports (2024-25):** Rs 21,083 crore (record; 30x increase since 2016-17)
- **iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence):** 400+ startups engaged in defence innovation

UPSC RELEVANCE

Project 17A, INS Taragiri pennant number, BrahMos range and speed, P-8I base location, NSTL/ADRDE/CEMILAC

Defence indigenisation; Make in India in defence; India's naval modernisation; MSME role in strategic manufacturing

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

PROJECT 17A (NILGIRI-CLASS):

Total: 7 frigates (4 MDL Mumbai + 3 GRSE Kolkata)

Displacement: 6,670 tonnes; length: ~149 m

Indigenous content: >75%; supply chain: 200+ Indian MSMEs

Design: Directorate of Naval Design (DND)

Stealth features: Reduced RCS, IR suppression, acoustic quieting

Cost: ~Rs 48,000 crore for all 7 ships

BRAHMOS MISSILE:

Joint venture: India (DRDO) + Russia (NPOM); est. 1998

Speed: Mach 2.8; Range: 290 km (extended: 450+ km after MTCR, 2016)

Named after: Brahmaputra (India) + Moskva (Russia)

Variants: Ship, submarine, air (Su-30MKI), land-based

ADC-150 & P-8I:

ADC-150: Air-droppable container; 150 kg payload capacity

P-8I Neptune: 12 aircraft; stationed at INS Rajali, Arakkonam

NSTL: Visakhapatnam (naval systems); ADRDE: Agra (aerial delivery)

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

Indian Navy strength: ~130 warships; target 175 by 2035

Defence production (2024-25): Rs 1.27 lakh crore (record)

Defence exports (2024-25): Rs 21,083 crore (record)

MDL: Also building Scorpene-class submarines (Project 75)

iDEX: 400+ defence startups engaged; under DIO (Defence Innovation Organisation)

Sources: [Hindustan Times](#), [PIB](#), [Indian Navy](#)



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