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# Three Warships, One Day — India's Defence Shipbuilding Moment and Its Market Gap



31 March 2026

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 Hindustan Times

31 March 2026

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## INTERVIEW ANGLE

*"GRSE has delivered 118 warships and India's frigates now carry BrahMos missiles. Yet India holds only 0.06% of the global shipbuilding market. Why can India build warships but not commercial ships?"*

## WHY IN NEWS

GRSE simultaneously delivered INS Dunagiri (Project 17A stealth frigate), INS Sanshodhak (survey vessel), and INS Agray (ASW craft) on March 31, 2026 — pushing its tally to 118 warships. INS Agray's ~88% indigenous content is a benchmark for Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence.

## A GENUINE INDUSTRIAL ACHIEVEMENT

Delivering three frontline naval platforms on a single day is not routine logistics management — it is a demonstration of industrial coordination, supply chain management, and production scheduling across a complex, precision-intensive sector. GRSE achieving this from its Kolkata shipyard, with INS Agray boasting ~88% indigenous content, signals that India's defence industrial base has genuinely matured since the days when frigates were imported fully built.

INS Dunagiri's CODAG propulsion — combining diesel for cruise and gas turbine for sprint — requires precision integration of multiple propulsion systems. BrahMos integration on a domestically-built platform represents a level of systems engineering that was, 20 years ago, available only to a handful of nations. India now sits in that group.

## THE MARKET GAP PROBLEM

Yet GRSE's achievement highlights an uncomfortable paradox. India can build nuclear submarines and stealth frigates, but holds only ~0.06% of the global commercial shipbuilding market. China, South Korea, and Japan collectively control ~85%. The global shipbuilding market is enormous — hundreds of millions of tonnes of new

tonnage ordered annually for container ships, tankers, bulk carriers.

The defence-commercial divergence has structural causes. Defence shipbuilding is protected, state-funded, and technically demanding — conditions that favour PSU shipyards. Commercial shipbuilding is volume-based, cost-driven, and competitive — requiring economies of scale, modern robotics, and lean supply chains that Indian shipyards haven't built.

## MARITIME INDIA VISION 2030 — TARGETS AND GAPS

India's Maritime India Vision 2030 targets top-5 shipbuilding nation by 2047, 12% maritime GDP contribution, and 25% of global seafarer workforce. These are ambitious benchmarks. Reaching them requires not just completing defence programmes but building a commercial shipbuilding industrial base from near-scratch.

Key enablers: Shipbuilding Financial Assistance Policy (SAP) — subsidies for domestically-built ships; designated shipbuilding clusters (AP's Dugarajapatnam is one of five planned); training infrastructure for Marine Engineers (India supplies 12% of global seafarers but struggles to retain them domestically). The missing piece is a pipeline of domestic orders — Indian shipping companies continue to order from Korean and Chinese yards because of competitive pricing and shorter delivery timelines.

## THE STRATEGIC CASE FOR SHIPBUILDING

India's dependence on foreign-flagged vessels for ~90% of its maritime trade is a strategic vulnerability. A wartime blockade or commercial disruption — as seen with COVID container disruptions and Red Sea tensions — would be devastating for a country importing ~85-88% of its crude oil by sea. Building a domestic merchant fleet, underpinned by a domestic shipbuilding industry, is as much a national security issue as building frigates.

### UPSC RELEVANCE

GRSE warship count (118); Project 17A; CODAG propulsion; BrahMos; INS Agray indigenisation (~88%); Maritime India Vision 2030; India's shipbuilding market share (~0.06%).

### MAINS GS-3:

“India's defence shipbuilding capability has grown significantly, but commercial shipbuilding remains underdeveloped. Analyse the structural gaps and suggest a path forward.”

### MAINS GS-2 (SECURITY):

India's maritime security and SAGAR doctrine — role of indigenous naval capability.

## ★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

### GRSE DELIVERIES (MARCH 31, 2026):

INS Dunagiri: P17A, 5th Nilgiri-class, 149m, 6,670t, CODAG, BrahMos

INS Sanshodhak: Hydrographic survey vessel (4th in class)

INS Agray: ASW Shallow Water Craft; ~88% indigenous

Total GRSE warships: 118 (80 for Indian Navy)

### INDIA SHIPBUILDING:

Global market share: ~0.06%

Top 3 builders: China (~44%), South Korea (~28%), Japan (~13%)

Indian seafarers (global share): 12% (target: 25% by 2047)

Maritime trade: ~90% on foreign-flagged vessels

### MARITIME INDIA VISION 2030 TARGETS:

Top 5 shipbuilding nation by 2047

Maritime GDP: 12% (current ~4%)

Cargo at Indian ports (FY24): 819.22 million tonnes (up 4.45%)

### OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

Shipbuilding Financial Assistance Policy (SAP): Government subsidy for domestic shipbuilding

Dugarajapatnam (AP): One of 5 national shipbuilding cluster sites

SAGAR: Security and Growth for All in the Region (India's IOR doctrine, PM Modi 2015)

Sources: [Indian Navy](#), [GRSE](#), [PIB](#)

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