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DRDO Conducts Phase-II Trial of LR-AShM — India's Long-Range Hypersonic Anti-Ship Missile

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DRDO Conducts Phase-II Trial of LR-AShM — India's Long-Range Hypersonic Anti-Ship Missile

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WHY IN NEWS

DRDO (Defence Research and Development Organisation) conducted the **Phase-II flight trial** of India's indigenously developed **Long-Range Anti-Ship Missile (LR-AShM)** from the **Odisha coast** into the **Bay of Bengal**. The missile — a **boost-glide hypersonic** system — reportedly struck its designated naval target at a range of approximately **1,500 km** at initial speeds of up to **Mach 10**. The test advances India's indigenously developed long-range maritime strike capability under the **AtmaNirbhar Bharat** defence programme. *[Note: Based on available reporting; PIB press release on Phase-II had not been issued at publication time.]*

WHAT IS LR-ASHM?

LR-AShM stands for **Long-Range Anti-Ship Missile** — India's most ambitious indigenously developed naval strike weapon. It is designed to:

- 1 **Target adversary surface vessels** (aircraft carrier battle groups, destroyers, amphibious vessels) at ranges well beyond existing BrahMos capability
- 2 **Defeat carrier-based air defence** through hypersonic speeds and manoeuvring glide phase
- 3 **Complement India's A2/AD strategy** in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) to deter Chinese naval power projection

Technical Characteristics (from available reporting)

PARAMETER	SPECIFICATION
Range	~1,500 km
Speed (boost phase)	Up to Mach 10
Speed (glide phase)	Mach 5+ (hypersonic)
Guidance	Terminal active radar seeker + inertial mid-course guidance
Launch platform	Surface-to-surface (naval vessel or shore-based)
Warhead	Conventional (HE, penetrator)
Design	Boost-glide — rocket boost then atmospheric glide trajectory
Phase-I tests	2023 and November 2024

HYPERSONIC WEAPONS — KEY CONCEPTS

What Makes a Weapon “Hypersonic”?

A weapon is classified as **hypersonic** if it travels at **Mach 5 or above** (five times the speed of sound — approximately 6,125 km/h at sea level). The LR-AShM achieves Mach 10 in its boost phase, making it one of the fastest anti-ship weapons if confirmed.

Two Types of Hypersonic Weapons

TYPE	DESCRIPTION	INDIA’S EXAMPLE
Hypersonic Glide Vehicle (HGV)	Launched on a ballistic trajectory, then glides at hypersonic speed using aerodynamic lift; highly manoeuvrable	LR-AShM (boost-glide design)
Hypersonic Cruise Missile (HCM)	Uses scramjet (supersonic combustion ramjet) to sustain hypersonic speeds through the entire flight	DRDO’s Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle (HSTDV) — successfully tested 2020

INDIA'S MISSILE PROGRAMME — KEY SYSTEMS

Anti-Ship Missiles

MISSILE	TYPE	RANGE	DEVELOPER
BrahMos	Supersonic cruise missile	290–800 km (extended range)	DRDO + Russia (NPO Mashinostroyeniya)
BrahMos-II (Hypersonic)	Hypersonic (Mach 7+)	300 km	Under development
LR-AShM	Boost-glide hypersonic	~1,500 km	DRDO (indigenous)

Hypersonic Programme Milestones

EVENT	DATE
HSTDV (Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle) successful test	September 7, 2020
LR-AShM Phase-I tests	2023 and November 2024
LR-AShM Phase-II test	~May 1, 2026 (from Odisha coast)

STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE

Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD)

India's LR-AShM serves as a cornerstone of its **maritime A2/AD strategy** — the ability to deny adversary naval forces (particularly Chinese carrier battle groups) freedom of manoeuvre in the Indian Ocean Region. A 1,500 km strike range covers:

- The **entire Bay of Bengal**
- Most of the **northern Indian Ocean**
- Potential operating areas for PLAN (People's Liberation Army Navy) carrier groups

Deterrence vs. China's IOR Expansion

China's **String of Pearls** — naval access agreements and infrastructure in Gwadar (Pakistan), Hambantota (Sri Lanka), Kyaukpyu (Myanmar), and Djibouti — has created a network of bases surrounding India's maritime periphery. A hypersonic anti-ship missile that can strike at 1,500 km significantly complicates Chinese naval

planning in the IOR.

DRDO's Indigenisation Drive

The LR-AShM is part of DRDO's post-Galwan acceleration — alongside the **MPATGM** (Man-Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile), **QRSAM** (Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air Missile), **Pralay** (quasi-ballistic missile), and the **Agni-V MIRV** test (March 2024). All represent India's shift from import-dependence toward self-reliance in critical defence systems.

UPSC RELEVANCE

PAPER	ANGLE
GS3 — Science & Technology	Hypersonic technology, DRDO, indigenous defence, BrahMos, A2/AD systems
GS3 — Security & Defence	India's maritime strategy, IOR, China's String of Pearls, naval balance
GS2 — International Relations	India-China maritime competition, Indo-Pacific security architecture

Mains Keywords: DRDO, LR-AShM, hypersonic, boost-glide, anti-ship missile, A2/AD (Anti-Access/Area-Denial), Indian Ocean Region, String of Pearls, BrahMos, HSTDV, AtmaNirbhar Bharat defence, Scramjet, Mach 5

Prelims Facts Corner

ITEM	FACT
LR-AShM	Long-Range Anti-Ship Missile (DRDO indigenous)
Design type	Boost-glide hypersonic
Range	~1,500 km
Speed	Mach 10 (boost phase)
Tested from	Odisha coast (Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island range)
HSTDV	Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle — tested Sept 7, 2020
BrahMos	India-Russia jointly developed supersonic cruise missile (up to 800 km)
Hypersonic definition	Mach 5+ ($\geq 6,125$ km/h at sea level)
A2/AD	Anti-Access/Area-Denial — strategy to deny adversary freedom of maritime manoeuvre

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