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INS Mahendragiri Inducted — Project 17A and India's Stealth Frigate Programme

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INS Mahendragiri Inducted — Project 17A and India's Stealth Frigate Programme

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WHY IN NEWS

INS Mahendragiri, the **sixth of seven Nilgiri-class stealth frigates** built under **Project 17A**, was formally delivered to the Indian Navy on **April 30, 2026** at **Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDSL), Mumbai**. The ship features **75% indigenous content by value**, BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles, MFSTAR active electronically scanned array radar, and MRSAM medium-range surface-to-air missile system — making it one of India's most capable warships ever commissioned.

PROJECT 17A — OVERVIEW

FEATURE	DETAIL
Programme name	Project 17A (P17A) — Nilgiri-class guided missile stealth frigates
Total ships	7 frigates
Builder 1	Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDSL) , Mumbai — 4 ships (lead yard)
Builder 2	Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE) , Kolkata — 3 ships
Designer	Warship Design Bureau (Indian Navy)
Contract signed	February 2015
Indigenous content	~75% by value (improved from ~30% in previous P17 Shivalik class)
Previous class	Project 17 — Shivalik class (3 frigates, 2010–2012)

Ship-Wise Status (Project 17A)

SHIP	BUILDER	STATUS
INS Nilgiri	MDSL	Commissioned 2024
INS Himgiri	MDSL	Commissioned 2025
INS Udaygiri	MDSL	Commissioned 2025
INS Dunagiri	GRSE	Commissioned 2025
INS Taragiri	GRSE	Commissioned 2025
INS Mahendragiri	MDSL	Delivered April 30, 2026
INS Vindhyagiri	GRSE	Under trials

All ships are named after mountain ranges of India — Nilgiri, Himgiri, Udaygiri, Dunagiri, Taragiri, Mahendragiri (Eastern Ghats, Odisha), Vindhyagiri.

INS MAHENDRAGIRI — TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

FEATURE	DETAIL
Classification	Guided missile stealth frigate
Displacement	~6,670 tonnes (full load)
Length	~149 metres
Propulsion	CODOG (Combined Diesel or Gas)
Speed	~28 knots
Range	~4,500 nautical miles
Crew	~250 officers and sailors

Weapons and Sensors

SYSTEM	DETAILS
BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles	Range ~450 km (extended range version); Mach 2.8; anti-ship + land attack
MRSAM (Medium Range Surface to Air Missile)	India-Israel co-development; intercepts aircraft, missiles, drones at 70 km range
MFSTAR radar	Multi-Function Surveillance and Threat Alert Radar; active phased array; 360° coverage
Torpedo tubes	For anti-submarine warfare
CIWS	Close-In Weapon System (last-ditch defence)
Helicopter	Carries naval helicopters (ASW/ASOR role)

SIGNIFICANCE — INDIA'S INDIGENOUS WARSHIP INDUSTRY

Strategic Import Substitution

Project 17A represents a **generational leap** in India's naval self-reliance:

PARAMETER	P17 (SHIVALIK, 2010)	P17A (NILGIRI, 2024-26)
Indigenous content	~30%	~75%
Radar	Foreign (MF-STAR import)	India-Israel co-produced
Missiles	Imported	BrahMos (India-Russia JV) + MRSAM (India-Israel)
Steel	Foreign	DMR 249A — indigenously developed warship-grade steel (SAIL)
Stealth features	Basic	Advanced — reduced radar cross-section hull, CODLAG propulsion-reducing acoustics

Make in India — Defence

- **MDSL** and **GRSE** are the backbone of India's surface warship construction
- INS Mahendragiri demonstrates India can design and build large complex warships domestically

- Part of the **10-year indigenous shipbuilding plan** that also includes destroyers (P15B), submarines (P75I), and aircraft carriers

THE HINDU EDITORIAL ANGLE — “AT SEA: ON PROJECT 17A”

The Hindu’s editorial (May 6, 2026) notes that **despite 75% indigenous content by value**, critical dependencies remain:

- Certain sensors are still imported
- Propulsion systems have foreign components
- Delays in delivery (original delivery dates slipped by 2–3 years) reflect production bottlenecks

The editorial calls for **indigenous development of marine gas turbines** — currently India’s biggest propulsion gap — and faster integration of **indigenous sonar and electronic warfare suites**.

UPSC RELEVANCE

PAPER	ANGLE
GS3 — Security	India’s defence modernisation, naval indigenisation, Project 17A
GS3 — Economy	Defence manufacturing, Make in India, PLI for defence
GS2 — Governance	MDSL, GRSE as PSUs; Warship Design Bureau; DDP role

Mains Keywords: Project 17A, Nilgiri-class frigate, INS Mahendragiri, BrahMos, MRSAM, MFSTAR, CODOG propulsion, MDSL, GRSE, Warship Design Bureau, Make in India defence, DMR 249A steel, naval indigenisation

Prelims Facts Corner

ITEM	FACT
INS Mahendragiri	6th of 7 Project 17A ships; delivered April 30, 2026; MDSL Mumbai
Project 17A total ships	7 Nilgiri-class frigates
Builders	MDSL (4 ships) + GRSE Kolkata (3 ships)
Designer	Warship Design Bureau (Indian Navy)
Indigenous content	~75% by value
Propulsion	CODOG (Combined Diesel or Gas)
Key weapons	BrahMos + MRSAM + MFSTAR
7th ship	INS Vindhyagiri (GRSE) — under trials
Named after	Mountain ranges of India
Previous class	Project 17 Shivalik class (3 ships, 2010–2012)

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