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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

# Building Our Own Fleet: On INS Dunagiri and Naval Indigenisation

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CURATED &amp; WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator &amp; Content Creator

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

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# Building Our Own Fleet: On INS Dunagiri and Naval Indigenisation

 **The Hindu** 21 June 2026 **GS3**

Source: [ujjyari.com](http://ujjyari.com) — researched, fact-checked & UPSC-mapped



## INTERVIEW ANGLE

*"Is indigenous warship-building now a strategic strength, or still dependent on imported critical systems?"*

Source: [Original editorial](#)  [The Hindu](#)

 **Every fact web-verified against primary sources** (<https://ujjyari.com/how-we-verify/>)

## WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

The Navy commissioned three GRSE-built vessels around mid-June, including a Project 17A stealth frigate (<https://ujjyari.com/vocab/frigate/>), a survey vessel and an anti-submarine warfare craft. The cluster of inductions is a milestone in India's effort to design and build its own warships, and a useful moment to ask what indigenous shipbuilding has actually achieved and where it still falls short.

## THE CRUX IN 60 WORDS

Indigenous warship-building has matured into both a security asset and an industrial multiplier, anchoring a wide MSME ecosystem. Project 17A frigates show growing design and integration capability. But propulsion, sensors and weapons remain substantially imported. The achievement is real yet conditional, sustained only by stable order pipelines, domestic design IP and deeper R&D.

## THE ISSUE, DECODED

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ELEMENT	WHAT IT IS	WHY IT MATTERS
Project 17A	Class of indigenous stealth frigates	Benchmark of design self-reliance
Warship Design Bureau	Navy's in-house design organisation	Source of indigenous design IP
MSME ecosystem	Supplier network for shipbuilding	Drives jobs and technology spillovers
IOR security	Indian Ocean Region maritime posture	Strategic rationale for a strong fleet

## THE ANALYSIS: STRATEGIC AND INDUSTRIAL DIVIDENDS

- 1 Strategic autonomy** (<https://ujijari.com/terms/strategic-autonomy/>) **from local builds.** A domestically built fleet shortens delivery and repair timelines and reduces **leverage** (<https://ujijari.com/vocab/leverage/>) held by foreign suppliers, vital in a contested Indian Ocean Region.
- 2 Economic multiplier effect.** Warship-building sustains a deep chain of MSMEs and ancillaries supplying steel, cabling and sub-systems, generating skilled jobs and spillover technology.
- 3 Design competence is rising.** The Warship Design Bureau and Project 17A demonstrate maturing in-house design and **modular** (<https://ujijari.com/vocab/modular/>) construction capability.
- 4 The import chokepoint** (<https://ujijari.com/vocab/chokepoint/>) **persists.** Engines, advanced sensors and several weapon systems remain imported or licence-produced, capping the degree of true self-reliance.

## DATA AND INSTITUTIONS VAULT

**Programme:** Project 17A, indigenous stealth guided-missile frigates. **Builder:** Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata. **Design body:** Warship Design Bureau of the Indian Navy. **Policy frame:** Aatmanirbhar Bharat in defence manufacturing. **Strategic theatre:** Indian Ocean Region (IOR) maritime security.

## THE DEBATE

**Argument for:** Indigenous shipbuilding delivers strategic autonomy, faster turnaround and a powerful industrial multiplier through the MSME ecosystem.

**Argument against:** Reliance on imported engines, sensors and weapons means India still builds hulls more than full systems, so claims of self-reliance are overstated.

**Balanced verdict:** Hull and integration competence is genuine and growing; the next frontier is the critical-systems gap. Progress is real but incomplete.

## HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS (TRANSFERABLE SKILL)

When assessing any self-reliance claim, disaggregate (<https://ujijari.com/vocab/disaggregate/>) the product into its value chain and ask which links are domestic and which are imported. Headline indigenisation figures can hide dependence on a few critical sub-systems. The analytical skill is to locate the chokepoint, not just the headline.

## DIAGRAM-IN-WORDS

Stable orders -> design IP and R&D -> indigenous shipbuilding -> strategic autonomy plus MSME-led growth

## THE WAY FORWARD

- 1 Maintain a predictable, long-horizon order pipeline so yards and vendors can invest.
- 2 Invest in domestic propulsion, sensors and electronics to close the import gap.
- 3 Secure ownership of design intellectual property within Indian institutions.
- 4 Strengthen the MSME ecosystem with finance, standards and technology support.
- 5 Link shipbuilding to a clear maritime strategy for the Indian Ocean Region.

## THE TAKEAWAY BOX

Defence indigenisation (<https://ujijari.com/vocab/indigenisation/>) as a joint security and industrial-policy project. **Lift line:** “The achievement is real yet conditional, sustained only by stable orders, domestic design IP and deeper R&D.” **Prelims hooks:** Project 17A, GRSE, Warship Design Bureau, Aatmanirbhar Bharat, Indian Ocean Region. **Ethics/Interview angle:** Balancing strategic autonomy with the cost and quality of domestic procurement. **PYQ linkage:** UPSC has asked on defence indigenisation and self-reliance in defence manufacturing. **Connects to:** Aatmanirbhar Bharat, MSME ecosystem, maritime security, defence procurement.

Sources: *The Hindu* (<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/>), *PIB* (<https://pib.gov.in/>)

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**KEY ARGUMENTS AT A GLANCE**

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**Indigenous warship-building has matured into a strategic and economic multiplier, but its gains depend on stable order pipelines, design IP and R&D depth.**

 **SUPPORTING**

- The economics are real: warship-building anchors a wide MSME and ancillary ecosystem.
- Project 17A frigates demonstrate growing self-reliance in design and integration.
- A capable fleet underpins India's maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region.

 **COUNTER**

Critics note that critical systems, engines, sensors and weapons are still substantially imported, limiting true self-reliance.

 **WAY FORWARD**

Sustain steady order pipelines, invest in domestic design IP, propulsion and electronics, and deepen R&D to close the import-dependence gap.


**MAINS ANSWER FRAMEWORK**

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**QUESTION**

*Indigenous warship-building is both a security and an economic project. Discuss the strategic and industrial significance of programmes like Project 17A. (250 words)*

**INTRODUCTION**

The commissioning of GRSE-built vessels, including a Project 17A frigate, marks a step in India's transition from buyer to builder of warships. The significance is at once strategic and industrial.

**BODY**

Indigenous shipbuilding delivers two dividends. Strategically, a domestically built fleet reduces dependence on foreign suppliers, shortens delivery and repair cycles, and strengthens India's posture in the Indian Ocean Region, where maritime competition is intensifying.

Industrially, each warship is built on a deep supply chain. The Warship Design Bureau supplies in-house design capability, and a large network of MSMEs supplies steel, fittings, cabling and sub-systems, generating skilled employment and technology spillovers under Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

Project 17A frigates, built at multiple yards, show maturing competence in design integration and modular construction. Yet self-reliance remains partial.

Propulsion systems, advanced sensors and several weapon systems are still imported or licence-produced, leaving critical chokepoints. The strategic value of the achievement is therefore conditional.

It depends on a stable, predictable order pipeline that lets yards and vendors invest, on ownership of design intellectual property, and on sustained R&D in propulsion and electronics. Stop-start ordering raises costs and erodes the ecosystem.

**CONCLUSION**

INS Dunagiri and its sister vessels signal real progress. Converting that into durable strategic autonomy requires steady orders, domestic design IP and R&D depth in the systems India still imports.


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CURATED & WRITTEN BY

## Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

 [linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

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