

Indian Navy's Submarine Arm

Why in news?

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The submarine arm of the Indian Navy is celebrating its golden jubilee this year

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How has the submarine arm progressed?

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- The submarine arm of the Indian Navy has made notable accomplishments since its inception.

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- This is possibly due to the professionalism of the human resource that lies at its core.

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- India acquired its first submarine, the INS Kalvari, on December 8, 1967.

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- In the intervening decades, the Navy has progressed to designing and indigenously building SSBNs (Ship Submersible Ballistic Nuclear), the INS Arihant.

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- The Navy has also invested in building conventional boats in India through partnership programmes with foreign suppliers.

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- Notably, India is the first country in the world to move straight to SSBNs, without moving up the scale from conventional boats.

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- The combination of warship building, submarine building and finally the nuclear submarine building has supported a whole range of SME/MSME segments of industry in India.

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- Further the plans for acquisition in place and operationalising them would give India a very credible underwater capability.

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What are the shortfalls?

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- **DSRV** - Submarine arm is one of the most hazardous and high-risk military specialisation.

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- To prepare for any exigency, every submarine-operating navy also invests in a deep submergence rescue vessel (DSRV).

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- Or it supposedly has access to DRSV with navies that have such a capability.

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- Sadly, the Indian Navy does not have a dedicated DSRV even as it enters its 51st year.

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- This void is expected to be filled only later in 2018.

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- **Administrative** - The long-delayed DSRV acquisition symbolises the systemic incompetence of the Indian military machine.

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- The inability of the Indian higher defence management ecosystem has deprived the Navy's submarine arm of a critical rescue capability.

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- The complacency in decision-making and ineffectiveness in policy formulation have adversely affected the Indian military profile.

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- **Corruption** - It was attempted to build two of the most advanced design of the German HDW submarines under the 'buy and make' concept.

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- However, it had to be prematurely abandoned due to the infamous HDW scandal and allegations of financial impropriety in the deal.

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- Resultantly, the indigenous submarine programme was set back by three decades.

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- It has taken decades for the procurement procedures to be revised to address issues related to blacklisting and the role of agents.

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- **Manpower constraints** - Constraints related to recruitment significantly impacts the modernisation and acquisition process.

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- Decommissioning old platforms to compensate for the immediate requirement of new induction has its own challenges.

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- A new platform demands trained manpower for operational needs.
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- Very importantly, it requires a host of administrative, logistics and repair support facilities that are manpower-critical.
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What is the way forward?

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- The navy has to strategically overcome the challenge of balancing the short and long term implications on manpower.
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- The core national security interests should be insulated from the vagaries of political/electoral compulsions.
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- Beyond the ceremonial symbolism, the Indian Navy should be given due focus for its substantive policy-related issues.
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Source: The Hindu

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