

# NAVY ON A MAJOR CAPABILITY UPGRADE

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Against the backdrop of increasing responsibilities in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) with the rising Chinese presence, the Indian Navy has embarked on a major capability upgrade. A Navy officer said that this year, on an average, 35 Navy ships were deployed every day.

“The Navy has undertaken 113 port calls including operational turnarounds this year and has participated in 21 exercises including the Indra series with Russia which began on Sunday,” the officer said.

Operational requirements have significantly gone up with the Navy ensuring the presence of at least one major ship at all critical choke points in the IOR under its mission-based deployments and increased military-to-military engagement with friendly nations as part of India’s defence diplomacy in which the Navy is at the forefront.

“As on today, 32 ships and submarines are presently under construction in Indian shipyards. These include the Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC) *Vikrant*, Project-15B destroyers, Project-17A stealth frigates, P-28 anti-submarine warfare (ASW) corvettes, offshore patrol vessels (OPV) and Scorpene class submarines ... In addition, government approval has also been accorded for 56 ships and six submarines,” the Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Sunil Lanba, said last week.

The 56 ships are in various stages of procurement and include replacements for existing platforms as well as new additions. “Construction activity will be spread over a decade,” Admiral Lanba stated. These include next generation frigates and destroyers, four stealth frigates from Russia, four landing platform decks (LPD), 16 shallow water craft, 12 mine sweepers, five fleet support ships (FSS), four survey vessels and two diving support vessels. All this comes against the backdrop of China increasing its presence and establishing permanent facilities in the IOR. Admiral Lanba stated that China deployed six to eight warships in the IOR at any given time.

The force enhancements were contingent on increased budgetary allocation which has not seen a major increase over the last few years.

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