

## India's P-18 Stealth Destroyer: A New Powerhouse for Indo-Pacific Security



India's naval capabilities are set for a substantial upgrade with the upcoming Project-18 Next-Generation Destroyer (NGD), a stealth vessel designed to carry an unprecedented 144 missile cells. This formidable warship, unveiled by the Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau (WDB), is poised to become one of the world's most heavily armed vessels, significantly bolstering India's ability to counter evolving naval threats in the Indo-Pacific region. The P-18 marks a major leap in indigenous warship construction, reflecting India's "Atmanirbhar Bharat" (self-reliant India) initiative in defense.

The P-18 destroyer, a successor to the current Visakhapatnam-class, is planned with a displacement of 13,000 tons, making it substantially larger and more powerful than its predecessors. This size places it in the cruiser category by international standards. Developed with advanced stealth features to minimize its radar signature and incorporating an efficient Integrated Electric Propulsion (IEP) system, the P-18 is designed for survivability and sustained operations in complex combat environments. Its electronic architecture, developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) provides 360-degree surveillance and can track numerous aerial and surface targets at long distances.

The most striking feature of the Project-18 is its immense firepower. The 144 Vertical Launch System (VLS) cells are intended to house a diverse array of missiles. This includes 32 cells for Long-Range Surface-to-Air Missiles (LRSAM), likely the developmental PGLRSAM with a 250 km range, offering robust air and ballistic missile defense. Additionally, 48 universal VLS cells will be dedicated to a mix of BrahMos Extended-Range supersonic cruise missiles and the

Indigenous Technology Cruise Missile (ITCM) for potent strikes against ships and land targets. The vessel will also be equipped to handle two multi-role helicopters and features systems for launching autonomous underwater vehicles and drones, enhancing its versatility in anti-submarine warfare, mine countermeasures, and surveillance.

The development of the Project-18 destroyer underscores India's firm commitment to safeguarding its interests in the Indo-Pacific and maintaining a robust defense posture against regional challenges. As countries in the Indo-Pacific continue to modernize their navies, the P-18 will provide the Indian Navy with a critical, high-capacity platform to project power and maintain maritime security. This ambitious project not only strengthens India's naval prowess but also highlights the nation's growing self-reliance in designing and building advanced warships.