

Indian Navy to Commission Six Remaining Nilgiri-Class Frigates by 2026



The Indian Navy is set to induct the remaining six Nilgiri-class stealth frigates by the end of 2026, in what officials are calling a significant boost to the nation's maritime strength and shipbuilding capabilities. The vessels are part of Project 17A, India's next-generation guided-missile frigate program.

The seven-ship Nilgiri-class fleet is being built by two domestic shipyards, Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) in Mumbai and Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE) in Kolkata. The lead ship, INS Nilgiri, is already undergoing sea trials and is expected to be commissioned later this year. The remaining six are currently in various stages of outfitting and trials.

Defense officials confirmed that the Indian Navy aims to have all seven frigates operational by late 2026, significantly expanding its blue-water capabilities amid growing maritime challenges in the Indo-Pacific region.

"These warships represent a key leap in technology, featuring improved stealth, multi-mission capability, and enhanced survivability," a senior Navy official told The Hindu. "Inducting them on schedule is critical to maintaining our combat edge."

The 6,700-ton Nilgiri-class frigates are equipped with advanced sensors, BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles, vertical launch systems for surface-to-air missiles, and indigenous combat management systems. Their design is an evolution of the earlier Shivalik class but with major upgrades in automation and stealth profiles.

As global tensions rise over key sea lanes and maritime security becomes a central focus for national defense, the Navy's modernization efforts have drawn strong backing. The Project 17A program not only strengthens naval readiness but also reflects India's push for greater self-reliance in defense production under the broader "Aatmanirbhar Bharat" (Self-Reliant India) initiative.

The program is also seen as a win for India's defense industrial base, with over 75% of the content sourced domestically. This includes propulsion systems, electronics, and weapon integration, according to data shared by the Ministry of Defense.

Defense analysts say the timely completion of Project 17A will provide India with a modern, flexible naval force capable of responding to a range of threats across the Indian Ocean region.

Looking ahead, the successful induction of these six frigates could lay the groundwork for more advanced surface combatants under future programs. Naval planners are already discussing follow-on designs with greater emphasis on unmanned systems and electronic warfare capabilities.