

1. Navy Plans 24 Submarines to Strengthen Fleet

Prelims Level: Science & Technology

Mains Level: GS-III Security Challenges and their Management in Bordered areas; Linkages of Organised Crime with Terrorism.

Why in News?

- To strengthen its underwater fleet, the Indian Navy plans to build 24 submarines, including six nuclear attack submarines, a parliamentary panel was told.

Submarines in the Navy:

- According to the data from Indian Navy, currently there are 2 nuclear submarines and 15 conventional submarines in its fleet.
- The two nuclear submarines in the fleet are INS Arihant and INS Chakra. Out of these INS Chakra has been leased from Russia.

Significance:

- Navy has made plans to build new submarines as the conventional submarines are more than 25 years old.
- Thirteen submarines in the fleet are between the age 17 and 32. Also, it is important for the Indian Navy to strengthen its fleet as there is increased activity of the Chinese in the Indian Ocean Region.
- The main issue that is further delaying addition of submarines to the fleet is US sanctions and CAATSA act of US. CAATSA is Countering American Adversaries Through Sanctions Act.
- Along with the Arihant Class SSBNs which are nuclear-powered submarines equipped with nuclear missiles, the Indian Navy has plans to build six nuclear attack submarines. They are also planned to be built indigenously in partnership with private sector industries.
- The Ship, Submersible, Ballistic, Nuclear (SSBN) is a nuclear powered ballistic missile submarine.

Concerns:

- Rising Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean region:
- The Indian Ocean Region, the area of operations of the Navy, has witnessed rising activities of the Chinese Navy. The Chinese have increased their presence in the form of increased patrolling by submarines and ships.

Aging Fleet:

- A majority of the conventional submarines in the Indian Navy are over 25 years old. Thirteen submarines are between 17 and 32 years, impairing the capability of the Indian submarines.

Delay in Commissioning New Submarines:

- The Indian Navy has been revamping its infrastructure, including procuring new ships to match the naval capabilities of the Chinese.
- Due to the delay in the new submarine construction projects like the six submarines under Project 75 being carried out at Mazagaon Docks, Mumbai, the Defence Ministry has approved Medium Refit cum Life Certification or MRLC of six older submarines.

The sanctions on Russia:

- The MRLC of submarine Sindhuraj was held up due to sanctions imposed by the U.S. on Russia. This has impeded the ability of Russia to submit bank guarantees and the integrity pact under the MRLC framework.
- The sanctions imposed on Russia by the U.S. under its Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) have severely impaired the capabilities of Russia to service the submarines it has leased out to India.