

Indian Navy's Budgetary Allocation and Recurring Complaints

The Indian Navy receives the lowest budget among the defense services, which is impacting its operational requirements and plans. The central budget for 2025-26 has allocated ₹6.81 lakh crore for the defense sector, with an annual growth of 9.53%.

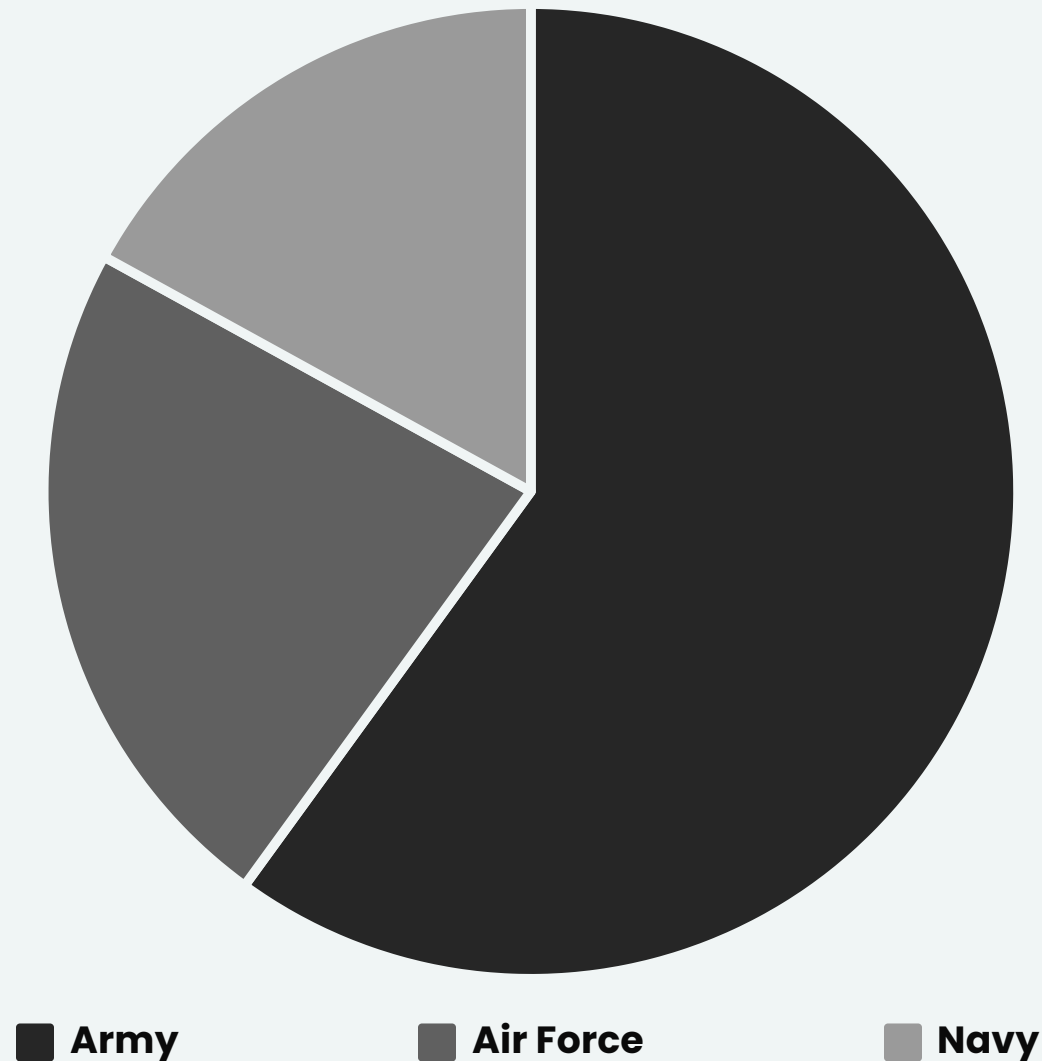
While the capital expenditure for the Indian Navy has seen a 10% annual increase over the past decade, the long-standing reality is that the Indian Navy receives the lowest amount of funds among the three services every fiscal year.



by OJAANK IAS



Navy's Budgetary Share



From financial year 2013-14 to 2023-24, the Navy's share has increased by only 0.4%. In contrast, the Indian Army's share in the total defense expenditure is now more than double that of the Navy.

The Navy's long-standing share of less than 20% is impacting its operational requirements. This is also evident from the 2024 Standing Committee on Defence (SCOD) report, which mentions the current deficiency of submarines, naval aircraft, and helicopters in the Navy's assets.

Impact on Navy Modernization



Cancellation of Projects

The resource crunch is so severe that expenditure on new modernization schemes has remained lower than committed liabilities. Apart from cancellation of some major projects, budgetary inadequacy has forced the Ministry of Defence to cut down on various planned procurements for the Navy.



Shift in Targets

While the Navy's target was to have a 200-ship fleet by 2027, budget cuts have revised this target to 175-200 ships by 2035. Consequently, despite indigenization efforts, budgetary inadequacy has impacted the Navy's modernization.



Asset Shortages

In 2020, the Navy had informed SCOD about shortages of platforms like aircraft carriers, Mine Counter Measure Vessels (MCMVs), and Landing Platform Docks (LPDs), affecting operational preparedness.

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The Need for Increased Capital Expenditure



Naval Vessels Under Construction

63 naval vessels are under construction and the Navy has preliminary approval for 31 additional warships, including seven new generation frigates, eight corvettes, and six conventional submarines.



Indigenization Targets

To achieve the goal of complete naval indigenization by 2047, New Delhi should immediately focus on 'Move' and 'Fight' category equipment, which currently have 60% and 50% indigenous content respectively.



Continuous Capital Inflow

Manufacturing institutions like the Center for Indigenization and Self-Reliance, which are undertaking complete indigenization of major foreign-origin naval platforms like INS Vikramaditya and Scorpene submarines, will require continuous capital inflow in the coming years.

Inadequacy of the Platform

Current Situation

India has made significant progress in surface ships such as guided missile destroyers and frigates, but the primary means of power projection and deterrence remain inadequate.

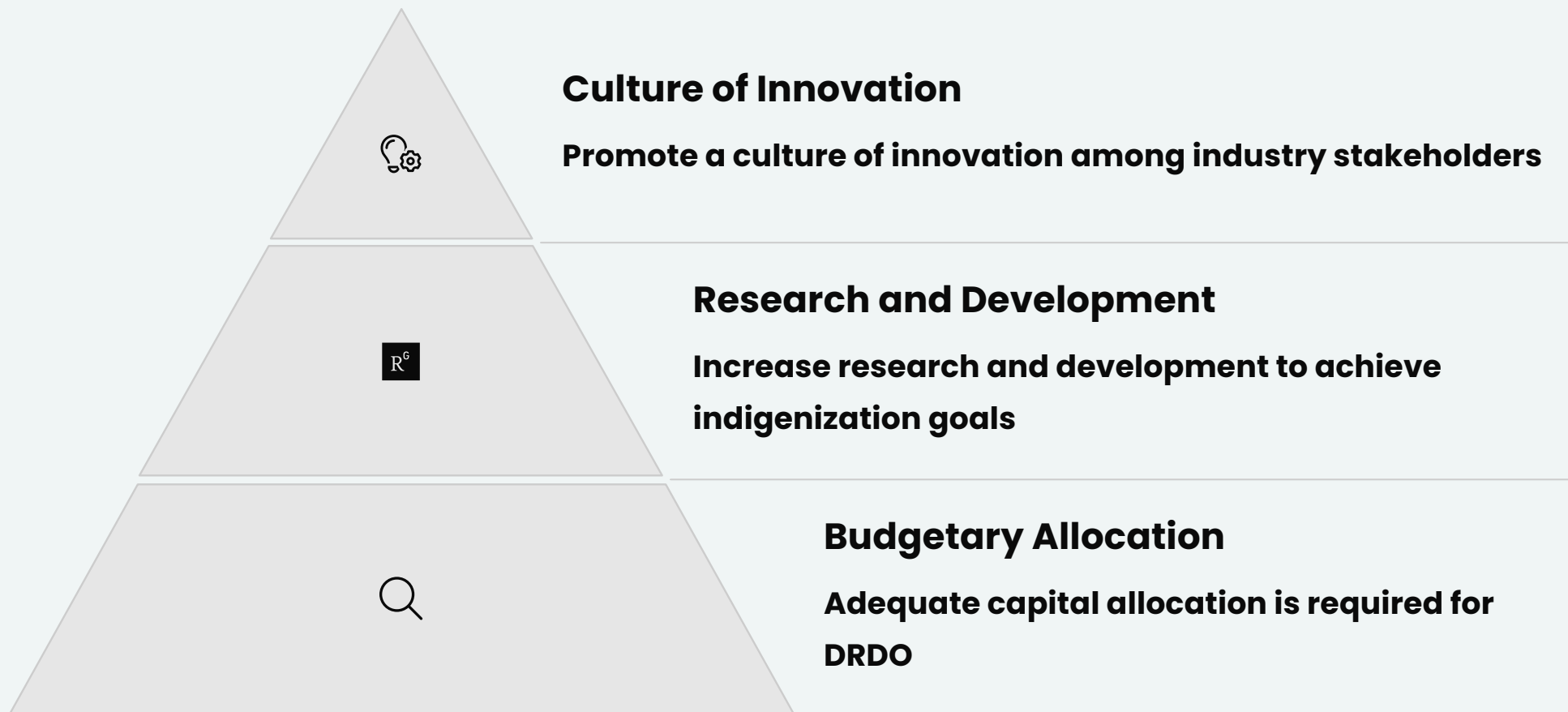
With only two aircraft carriers and nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBN), and no nuclear attack submarine (SSN), there is no 24x7 surveillance on both coasts (Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal).

Status of Submarines

Of the 18 submarine platforms in the Indian Navy's fleet, of which nearly half are operational at any given time, 11 boats are over three decades old and need to be decommissioned soon.

This situation has arisen because of significant delays in several projects, including submarines, primarily due to financial constraints.

Research and Development Projects



The budget provides for an annual growth of 12% for the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), but the allocated funds for financing research and development projects are only 2% of the total defence budget. Moreover, DRDO's share in the defence budget has decreased from 4.7% to 3.8% over the past decade.

Import Dependence



High Import Dependence

High import dependence due to inadequate budgetary support



Significant Expenditure

Dependence on naval assets leads to significant expenditure



Strategic Vulnerabilities

Susceptibility to uncertainties in the global supply chain

Between 2012 and 2022, foreign acquisitions of the Navy were 38% of total defense acquisitions. Dependence on naval assets not only leads to significant expenditure, but also makes the national security susceptible to uncertainties in the global supply chain.

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China and Pakistan's Shadow



China's Presence

The People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) operates an average of 8 to 10 ships, submarines, and dual-use 'research vessels' in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) annually. China has consistently docked naval assets in India's periphery.



Pakistan's Naval Development

Pakistan already has air-independent propulsion (AIP) equipped submarines and is set to acquire 8 more such platforms (armed with heavy torpedoes and anti-ship cruise missiles) from China by 2028.



Joint Naval Exercises

PLAN conducts regular naval exercises with its Pakistani counterpart – the scale of these joint exercises has increased in recent years – including unmanned aerial systems that have been used by Islamabad for surveillance in Kashmir earlier.

Strategic Weaknesses

Inadequate Budget

Insufficient funds for the modernization of the Navy

Strategic Weaknesses

Supply chain affected by global conflicts



Project Delays

Delays in major projects due to financial constraints

Import Dependence

Reliance on foreign suppliers for critical equipment

India's strategic weaknesses were evident in its willingness to lease platforms such as the MQ-9B drone in 2020 and the Russian Akula class SSN in 2011. The Russian SSN, which was to be delivered this year, is now delayed until 2028 due to the Russia-Ukraine war, exposing India's strategic vulnerabilities.

The Way Forward

Budgetary Reassessment

It is evident that the budgetary share of the Navy within the defense services needs to be reassessed in order to manage the existing imbalance between planned acquisitions and modernization allocations.

Operational Requirements

An increased budget will help meet operational requirements and mitigate strategic vulnerabilities, enabling the Indian Navy to maintain its position as the strongest resident force in the Indian Ocean region.

Non-Lapsable Fund

The recommendations of the Fifteenth Finance Commission should be considered, which suggest the creation of a non-lapsable Defense Modernization Fund and initial steps regarding sources.





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