Fifty years of the Indian Navy's long-range maritime reconnaissance

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Exam relevance: Prelims, defence technology and naval institutions; GS-III, maritime security



Photo: Defence Ministry / PIB

Why in the news

The Indian Navy marked fifty years of Long-Range Maritime Reconnaissance (LRMR) on 18 November 2026. The occasion also marked the golden jubilee of Indian Naval Air Squadron INAS 312, the Albatross. The Defence Ministry's PIB release traces the development of sustained airborne surveillance over the sea.

What LRMR does

Maritime security involves more than sending a warship to a location. It also requires identifying activity over large areas and sharing information with other units. Shore-based long-range aircraft work with ships and helicopters. Modern LRMR capability includes intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, anti-submarine warfare and maritime strike.

Aircraft and institutions: the sequence

- **18 November 1976:** INAS 312 was commissioned at INS Hansa, Goa, with five Lockheed Super Constellation aircraft transferred from the Indian Air Force.
- **1977:** The Il-38 strengthened maritime reconnaissance and anti-submarine capability.

- **1988:** The Tu-142M joined INAS 312 and extended patrol reach across the Indian Ocean Region.
- **2013:** Induction of the P-8I at INS Rajali, Arakkonam, brought a further advance in wide-area surveillance, anti-submarine warfare and maritime strike.

According to the 18 November release, P-8I aircraft operate with INAS 312 at INS Rajali and INAS 316 at INS Hansa. A squadron's current base should not be confused with the place where it was originally commissioned.

Security and assistance

PIB records support for Operations Cactus, Vijay, Parakram and Sindoor, along with anti-piracy and search-and-rescue missions. LRMR therefore contributes both to security operations and to responding to maritime emergencies. The distinction matters in an exam answer: an aircraft can help detect and assess a situation even when it does not itself conduct a strike. Information supports decisions about where other naval resources are needed.

Exam distinction

INAS refers to an air squadron; INS Hansa and INS Rajali are naval air stations. The arrival of the P-8I in 2013 was not the beginning of LRMR operations. The anniversary is anchored in the commissioning of INAS 312 in 1976.

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Prelims practice

Question 1

Consider the following statements:

Statement 1: INAS 312 was commissioned at INS Hansa in 1976.

Statement 2: Its initial Super Constellation aircraft were transferred from the Indian Air Force.

Statement 3: The Navy's LRMR capability began with the induction of the P-8I in 2013.

Which statements are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

▼ **Answer and Explanation**

Correct answer: (a)

Statements 1 and 2 are correct. The P-8I was a later modernisation milestone, not the start of the capability. Source: Defence Ministry/PIB, 18 November 2026.

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Question 2

According to the Defence Ministry's release of 18 November 2026, which pair is correctly matched?

(a) Current P-8I operations of INAS 312: INS Rajali, Arakkonam
(b) Current P-8I operations of INAS 316: INS Utkrosh in the Andamans
(c) Original commissioning of INAS 312: INS Rajali, 2013
(d) Induction of the Tu-142M into INAS 312: 1976

▼ **Answer and Explanation**

Correct answer: (a)

The release places INAS 312 at Rajali and INAS 316 at Hansa. INAS 312 was originally commissioned at Hansa in 1976; the Tu-142M joined in 1988.

Source

Defence Ministry/PIB, 18 November 2026: https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2337736

Frequently asked questions

Which year anchors the LRMR golden jubilee?

The reference year is 1976. INAS 312 was commissioned on 18 November 1976 at INS Hansa, Goa.

Are INAS 312 and INS Rajali the same kind of institution?

No. INAS 312 is a naval air squadron; INS Rajali is a naval air station.

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