



DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

TOPIC

**INDIAN ARMED FORCES:
BUILDING A FUTURE-READY
MILITARY**

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INDIAN ARMED FORCES: BUILDING A FUTURE-READY MILITARY

Context

- India is reimagining its military doctrine, structure, and technology to build a future-ready force, from cyber warfare to space-based operations driven by artificial intelligence, automation, drones, and precision-guided weaponry.

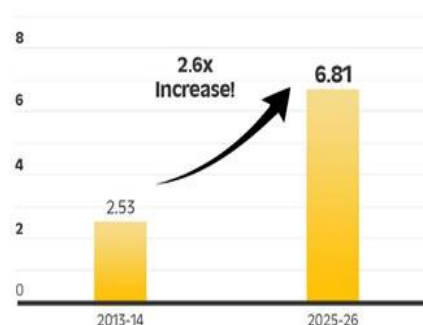
About Indian Armed Forces

- These comprise **three professional uniformed services** (Army, Navy, and Air Force), tasked with defending India's sovereignty, securing its borders, and supporting peacekeeping and humanitarian missions globally.
- Each service is headed by a Chief of Staff, reporting to the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and the Ministry of Defence.

Why India Needs A Future Ready Military?

- Lack of Jointness and Integrated Command:** Despite repeated calls for jointness among the Army, Navy, and Air Force, **integration remains limited:**
 - Service silos persist, slowing down coordinated operations.
 - The move toward integrated theatre commands is still in early stages, **unlike China's fully operational model.**
- Slow Pace of Structural Reforms:** Administrative and operational reviews lack urgency. **Theatrisation** remains **undefined in the Indian context**, risking misalignment with strategic needs, and **implementation is uneven.**
- Technology Lag and Adaptability:** Modern warfare now spans cyber, space, and AI-driven domains, but India's military is **still catching up:**
 - Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), hypersonic missiles, and satellite-based surveillance are reshaping battlefields.
 - The pace of tech adoption is slower than the rate of innovation, creating vulnerabilities.
 - Surprise elements in warfare — like cyberattacks and AI decision-making — require rapid adaptability, which current systems struggle to deliver.
- Doctrinal Gaps and Operational Readiness:** Doctrines haven't translated into real-world synergy. **Modular combat units** (e.g., 'Rudra' and 'Bhairav') are promising but not widely deployed.
- Indigenous Innovation vs. Global Standards:** India's push for Atmanirbhar Bharat in defense manufacturing is commendable, but:
 - Indigenous systems** are **still being scaled** for export and deployment.
 - Defense R&D needs faster cycles and deeper collaboration with private industry.
 - Global interoperability remains limited, affecting joint exercises and strategic partnerships.
- Strategic Vision and Leadership:** Defense leadership acknowledges the need to define the battlefield, not just respond to it. But:
 - Strategic planning must evolve beyond traditional metrics like troop strength and weapon stockpiles.
 - Future wars will be shaped by technology, intelligence, economy, and diplomacy—requiring a holistic approach.

India's
Defence Budget Growth
(₹ Lakh Crore)

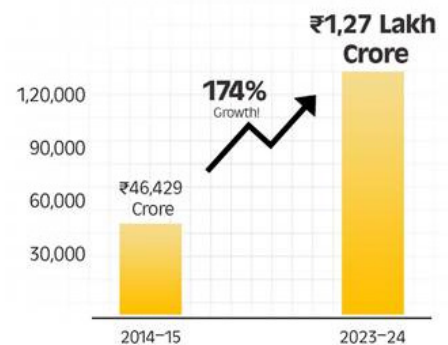


Efforts & Initiatives: Building a Future-Ready Indian Military

- Jointness and Integrated Theatre Commands:**
 - Combined Commanders' Conference 2025** emphasized 'Year of Reforms – Transformation for the Future'.
 - Push for **Integrated Theatre Commands** to unify Army, Navy, and Air Force operations under a single command structure.

- ♦ **New Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control and Discipline) Rules, 2025** empower joint commanders with cross-service authority.
- **Atmanirbharta (Self-Reliance) and Indigenous Innovation:** Indigenous platforms like **Tejas fighter jets**, **BrahMos missiles**, **Akash air defense systems**, and advanced UAVs are now operational and export-ready.
 - ♦ Defense production hit a record 1.27 trillion in FY2024, up 174% from FY2015.
 - ♦ Strategic partnerships with global firms (e.g., Boeing, Dassault, Rafael) are boosting local manufacturing and technology transfer.
- **Next-Gen Combat Exercises and Multi-Domain Readiness: Debut of ASHNI platoons**, integrating advanced tech with traditional combat skills for decisive advantage.
 - ♦ **Exercise Yudh Kaushal 3.0 in Arunachal Pradesh** showcased high-altitude warfare capabilities, drone surveillance, precision strikes, and synchronized battlefield tactics.
- **Embracing Emerging Technologies:** Focus on AI, cyber warfare, space-based operations, and electronic warfare.
 - ♦ Tri-service agencies for cyber, space, and special operations established under Integrated Defence Staff.
- **Structural and Administrative Reforms:** Holistic review of operational readiness, logistics, and personnel policies.
 - ♦ Creation of **National IHR Authorities** to coordinate health emergencies and integrate military response with civilian systems.
- **Doctrinal and Technological Evolution:** The *Joint Doctrine of the Indian Armed Forces* (2017) and the *Army's Land Warfare Doctrine* (2018) laid the groundwork for synergy.
 - ♦ Recent initiatives like **Ran Samvad (the first tri-service seminar on warfighting)** stressed the rise of hybrid warriors—officers who blend military acumen with technological and information skills.
- **New Structures and Battle Formations: MQ-9B drones** now provide persistent ISR and precision strike capabilities across services.
 - ♦ The **Navy's Rafale-M** order strengthens maritime strike and air defence.
 - ♦ **Army's AI-enabled Akashteer** integrates with the Air Force's IACCS for advanced air defence coordination.
- **Building a Modern Force:** The **Army's** Integrated Battle Groups (Rudra) are designed to mobilise within 12–48 hours with combined arms elements, drones, and loitering munitions.
 - ♦ At the strategic level, the Pralay **quasi-ballistic missile** enhances land-based theatre fires.
 - ♦ The Navy is pursuing a **15-year roadmap** for balanced growth in air, subsurface, and unmanned domains.

India's Defence Production Soars



Way Forward: Integration, Education, and Civil-Military Fusion

- **Stable Jointness:** Theatre commands with phased mandates and iterative authority.
- **Advanced Professional Military Education (PME) and Military Readiness:** Training technologist-commanders who can operate in hybrid, multi-domain environments.
- **Civil-Military Fusion:** Collaboration with DRDO, defence PSUs, private industry, and academia for rapid prototyping, coding, and testing.
- **Adaptive Cycles:** Industrial and military ecosystems that retire outdated systems quickly and retain only effective solutions.

Source: TH

Daily Mains Practice Question

[Q] Discuss the key reforms and strategic initiatives undertaken by the Indian Armed Forces to build a future-ready military. What are the major challenges that could hinder the successful implementation of these efforts?