

Mahendragiri, an indigenous stealth frigate, to be commissioned on July 11

Amrita Nayak Dutta
New Delhi, July 6

THE INDIAN Navy is set to commission its sixth Project 17A indigenous stealth frigate, Mahendragiri (F38), at Visakhapatnam on July 11. It was designed by the Navy's Warship Design Bureau and built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited, Mumbai.

According to the Navy, it exemplifies India's growing expertise in indigenous warship design and construction.

The warship incorporates advanced stealth features, enhanced survivability, a reduced radar signature, and a high degree of automation. The frigate is powered by a modern combined diesel or gas propulsion system, enabling high-speed operations with exceptional endurance across the full spectrum of maritime missions.



It is powered by a modern combined diesel or gas propulsion

“Capable of undertaking anti-air, anti-surface, and anti-submarine operations, Mahendragiri is equally suited for maritime security, power projection, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, search and rescue, and sustained presence missions,” the Navy said in a statement.

With over 75 per cent indigenous content, the construction of the frigate has

brought together a vast network of Indian industries, including numerous micro, small, and medium enterprises, generating employment while strengthening the nation's defence industrial base, the statement added.

“As successive frigates of the class join the fleet, they continue to strengthen the Indian Navy's combat capability while reinforcing India's position as a

E. EXPLAINED

Sixth addition under Project 17A

Stealth frigate is equipped with an advanced suite of indigenous and state-of-the-art weapons and sensors, including surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missile systems, electronic warfare capabilities, comprehensive anti-submarine warfare systems, and an integrated combat management system.

leading indigenous warship-building nation,” the Navy said, adding that Mahendragiri will serve as a formidable force multiplier, safeguarding the nation's maritime interests and contributing to a secure, stable,

and prosperous Indo-Pacific.

The frigate is named after the Mahendragiri mountain range in the Eastern Ghats, and embodies resilience, strength and unwavering resolve, according to the Navy. The frigate is the first naval warship to bear the name.

Six of the seven Project 17A stealth frigates have been commissioned into the Indian Navy since 2025.

Last month, the fifth Project 17A stealth frigate, INS Dunagiri, was commissioned into the Navy. Earlier this year, in April, the fourth frigate, INS Taragiri, was commissioned. In August last year, the Navy commissioned the second and third Project 17A frigates, INS Udaygiri and INS Himgiri. The lead ship of the class, INS Nilgiri, was commissioned in January 2025. The seventh and final Project 17A frigate is also expected to be commissioned later this year.

Facing backlash, Govt likely to delay higher 25% ethanol blend in petrol

Move comes on back of consumer concerns on mileage and fears of engine damage

Anil Sasi

New Delhi, July 6

AMID A raging backlash over a rapid increase in the use of ethanol in petrol from 10% to 20% in just three years, the government is likely to push back the proposed shift to a higher blend of ethanol fuel E25 comprising 75% petrol and 25% ethanol.

The government had originally planned to dispense petrol blended with 20% ethanol only by 2030. But the E20 fuel — 80% petrol and 20% ethanol



EXPLAINED

What is the ethanol advantage?

Ethanol has many positives including low carbon content, and lower dependence on import of fossil fuels. But a rapid increase in ethanol has triggered concerns, which the government plans to address before introducing E25.

— is now the standard petrol variant available nationwide.

While no formal date has been announced for dispensing E25 blended petrol, two government decisions over the last six weeks triggered fresh

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25% ethanol blend

concerns: one, central excise duty exemption for blended fuel (22%-30% ethanol) and two, fuel standards notified by BIS for these blends.

These measures were inferred as heralding the government's intent to prepare the vehicular and fuel ecosystems for the next stage of ethanol adoption, with the specific proposal to go beyond E20 stoking concern among both car makers and motorists.

But even before this, the rapid upshift or advancing of the transition to E20 by five years has left a section of consumers complaining about a perceptible drop in fuel economy. They have also expressed concerns over vehicular part damage in older cars, especially as ethanol content progressively goes up.

In the backdrop of such sentiments, a meeting at the most senior levels of the government last week is learnt to have advised about the need to scientifically address some of the genuine concerns. This included an effort to ask OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) to address the consumer complaints. Officials also said some of which are inferred to be "overblown".

The sources said the government reckons the need to give sufficient time for ecosystem readiness and why they must avoid pushing through the transition to the E25 fuel, especially in the context of the rushed E20 transition earlier.

"There is a view (within the government) that the transition beyond E20 will need to be spaced out. That is the sense we have got from vehicle manufacturers too. The idea is to go to E25 in a calibrated, graded manner for existing vehicles," a senior government official told *The Indian Express*.

It is, however, the transition to the E25 fuels that has players in the vehicular ecosystem worried, especially given how rushed the E10 to E20 transition was. For older vehicles and those certified for E10 petrol, this transition came about rather quickly, without sufficient warnings of the consumer-end pitfalls. The experience left motorists, especially those owning older cars and two-wheelers, feeling somewhat short-changed.

Using a higher ethanol blend in petrol for engines, especially those not designed for these

blends, results in a drop in fuel economy depending on when the car was manufactured. Older vehicles fare comparatively worse in this transition. While a fuel with 10% ethanol (E10) made little difference to a car's performance, the transition to E20 did impact the operational parameters of older vehicles. And the worsening of the performance does not exactly progress in a linear fashion as the blending levels keep increasing.

Ethanol has lower calorific value than petrol, which results in a perceptible drop in mileage. Also, regular petrol cars running on higher ethanol blends, alongside the drop in mileage, are harder to start on winter mornings because ethanol burns at a higher temperature than petrol. The concern that auto companies have expressed is that filling E25 fuel in internal combustion engine vehicles, especially older ones, could see some damage to parts owing to factors like corrosion, given ethanol's hygroscopic nature that promotes water uptake.

Ethanol also has its positives, including a higher octane number (or the fuel's ability to withstand premature combustion due to compression). Plus, higher blending is more eco-friendly given ethanol's lower carbon content and cuts down on fuel imports. Multiple car-makers in India told *The Indian Express* that they have now begun working on engines with higher compression ratios to extract the maximum mileage out of higher ethanol blends, but that is all for the future. The transition to E25 is something that vehicle owners privately admit to be concerned about, especially if this is rushed through. On its part, the government continues to maintain that the roll-out of higher ethanol-petrol blends will only be done after proper testing and stakeholder consultations.

The proposed E25 transition requires automakers to do additional engineering and validation work around engine calibration, fuel-system durability, corrosion resistance, and material compatibility. And homologation — the process that officially certifies a vehicle or component as compliant with regulations pertaining to safety, environment, and road-worthiness — at the end. All this needs time, which could be impacted if the transition is a rushed affair.

Pahalgam attack: NIA files charges against LeT chief

Supplementary chargesheet provides details of Pakistan's conspiracy, Saeed's role, and supporting evidence collected by the agency in case; LeT, TRF charged as legal entities for their role in attack

The Hindu Bureau

SRINAGAR

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Monday filed charges against Hafiz Saeed, chief and founder of the Pakistan-based terrorist organisation Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and its proxy The Resistance Front (TRF), in the Pahalgam terror attack case.

Twenty-six civilians were killed in the attack on April 22, 2025.

An NIA spokesperson said a supplementary chargesheet was filed before the NIA Special Court in Jammu.

"The accused has been charged under various sections of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023 and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. NIA

Terror trail

Hafiz Saeed (76) is the chief and founder of Pakistan-based terrorist organisation Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)

- He is believed to be behind the 2000 Red Fort attack, 2001 Parliament attack, 2002 Akshardham Temple attack and the Mumbai train bombings in 2006
- India termed Saeed the mastermind of 2008 Mumbai terror attacks and sought his extradition multiple times
- In 2008, he was designated as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist by the United States



has also invoked the penal section against the accused for waging war against India and hatching a conspiracy from across the border in the chargesheet," the NIA said.

The latest chargesheet, filed in continuation of the original 1,597-page char-

gesheet, provides details of Pakistan's conspiracy, Saeed's role, and supporting evidence collected by the NIA in the case "through meticulous scientific investigation and on-ground examination".

The NIA had filed the original chargesheet on

December 15, 2025. It had then charged Pakistani terrorist handler Sajid Jatt as an accused along with three terrorists, who were killed by the security forces during Operation Maha-dev in July 2025.

Besides, two arrested accused, civilians who allegedly provided logistics to the attackers, were named in the previous chargesheet.

The NIA has charged the LeT and the TRF as legal entities for their "role in planning, facilitating, and executing the Pahalgam terror attack".

"The NIA continues to probe the case to unravel the complete conspiracy by Pakistan, which has been actively sponsoring terrorism on Indian soil from across the border," the central agency said.

Modi begins three-nation trip, starts with Indonesia to boost strategic ties

Prime Minister set to hold discussions with Indonesian President Subianto to add 'momentum to this partnership across diverse sectors'; he will travel to Australia and New Zealand next as part of efforts to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific

Press Trust of India

JAKARTA

P rime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Indonesia on Monday, on the first leg of his three-nation tour, aimed at further strengthening India's Act East Policy, MAHASAGAR Vision and its commitment to a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific.

In a special gesture, Mr. Modi was received at the airport by Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto. In addition, four Ministers were also present to receive the Prime Minister, who was accorded a traditional ceremonial welcome and a Guard of Honour.

"Landed in Jakarta. I'm touched by President Prabowo Subianto's gesture of welcoming me at the air-



Grand welcome: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto upon arrival in Jakarta on Monday. PTI

port," Mr. Modi said in a social media post.

This is Mr. Modi's first bilateral visit to Indonesia since the elevation of ties to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2018.

Mr. Modi said he will hold discussions with Mr.

between our nations. While in Indonesia, I also look forward to interacting with the Indian community," he added. The centuries-old temple, located approximately 17 km northeast of Yogyakarta city, is considered Indonesia's largest Hindu temple.

Mr. Modi witnessed a performance of Wayang Kulit, Indonesia's treasured shadow puppetry tradition, bringing the timeless story of the Ramayana to life. "It was a moving reminder of how our shared civilisational heritage has travelled across seas and generations, taking on beautiful local expressions while preserving its eternal values.," he said.

Ahead of his departure from New Delhi, Mr. Modi said his visit to Indonesia,

Australia and New Zealand would further strengthen India's Act East Policy, MAHASAGAR Vision as well as "our outlook towards a free and open Indo-Pacific." MAHASAGAR, or Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security Across the Regions, is India's vision of security and growth for all regions.

Mr. Modi's visit comes after Mr. Prabowo's State visit to India as the chief guest at the Republic Day celebrations in January 2025.

From Indonesia, Mr. Modi will travel to Melbourne at the invitation of Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. The final leg of the tour will take him to Auckland at the invitation of New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon.

Subianto "aimed at adding even more momentum to this partnership across diverse sectors."

"President Prabowo and I will visit the Prambanan Temple complex in Yogyakarta. This will ensure closer cultural linkages bet-

Two Assam Rifles personnel killed in ambush in Manipur

The Hindu Bureau

GUWAHATI

Unidentified gunmen ambushed an Assam Rifles patrol in Manipur's Ukhrul district on Monday afternoon, killing two personnel and injuring others.

Although no armed organisation has claimed responsibility for the attack, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) is known to wield clout in the area about 16 km east of the district headquarters, Ukhrul. Also known as the Isak-Mui-vah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland, the NSCN has been part of a ceasefire agreement since July 1997.

District officials said the incident occurred near Nungshangkong at around 1.30 p.m. There were reports of intermittent exchange of fire for at

The attack by
unidentified gunmen
was followed by
exchange of fire for
at least three hours

least three hours after the incident.

The ambushed personnel reportedly belonged to the 40 Assam Rifles detachment stationed at Sangshak in the district.

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh condemned the killing and conveyed his deepest condolences to the bereaved families of the two Assam Rifles personnel. "The government will not tolerate such brutal violence and will not remain a mute spectator to these atrocities," he said.

He also said those responsible would be arrested and punished.

Jaishankar gearing up to lead India's campaign for non-permanent seat at UN Security Council

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

India on July 13 will launch the official campaign for a non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council during 2028-29. According to a press note by the Ministry of External Affairs, the launch will be made by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar who is currently travelling in the Gulf region and will reach New York city on July 10 for the official ceremony that will be crucial from the point of view of India's leadership position in the Global South.

The bid will also require substantial diplomatic mobilisation by India as Tajikistan will be the other candidate for the seat meant for the Asia-Pacific region.

Support from nations

While India has received support from countries such as Fiji, United States, Austria and Sri Lanka, it will have to do considerable diplomatic heavy lifting as Tajikistan has already secured the support of the OIC bloc that consists of 57

member-states of the United Nations. That apart, both countries are members of the SCO that will hold the next summit meeting in Kyrgyzstan, adding a special significance to the summit from the point of view of UNSC ambitions of India and Tajikistan.

Evolving equation

Mr. Jaishankar has been to various countries over the past months with an eye to the evolving equation at the United Nations because of India's plans for the 2028-29 UNSC non-permanent membership.

He will reach New York city for extensive consultations with India's partners at the UN. While India has been advocating a reform at the UNSC and also has been championing the needs of the Global South, recent trends however have not gone according to the plans.

Earlier in May, India postponed the India-Africa Forum Summit that was to be held during May 28-31 citing the Ebola outbreak in Africa.

China test-fires 'strategic' missile in the Pacific, raises regional concerns

Beijing says 'missile carrying a training simulation warhead' was launched successfully; the test involved a nuclear-capable 'long-range ballistic missile', says New Zealand; on the same day, China began its annual joint naval exercises with Russia

Agence France-Presse
BEIJING

A Chinese submarine test-fired a "strategic" missile carrying a dummy warhead into the Pacific Ocean on Monday, Beijing said, drawing immediate condemnation from nations in the region.

China made the rare show of its military might on the same day Australia and Fiji signed a major defence treaty, bolstering their ties as Canberra seeks to outmanoeuvre Beijing in the strategically important South Pacific.

New Zealand described the test as involving a nuclear-capable "long-range ballistic missile", but Chi-



Russian missile cruiser *Varyag* sails into a military port in China's Qingdao to participate in the joint naval exercise on Sunday. AP

na's Defence and Foreign Ministries did not confirm whether an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) had been used.

Monday's test followed two years after China's elite Rocket Force fired an

ICBM into the sea near French Polynesia, its first launch of such a missile over international waters in more than 40 years.

A nuclear submarine launched a "strategic missile carrying a training sim-

ulation warhead" at 12:01 pm (04:01 GMT), a Chinese Navy statement said, adding that it had "accurately land(ed) in the designated sea area".

Neighbours alarmed

New Zealand's Foreign Minister Winston Peters said the launch was carried out "within hours" of his country being told. "The Pacific is an Ocean of Peace and we are deeply concerned by China's testing of nuclear-capable weapons into the South Pacific," Mr. Peters said in a statement.

Australia called the launch "destabilising", while Japan said it had "expressed serious concerns" and Taiwan maintained

that China "is deliberately demonstrating its military might, escalating tensions in the region".

Russia defended Beijing's test-firing, saying "we believe it is the sovereign right of China to test its missiles" and that "China is not threatening anyone in the world."

On Monday, Beijing began annual joint naval exercises with Russia off Qingdao, a major military port and seaside resort in China's east. "The participating warships will conduct drills in areas such as joint reconnaissance, air and missile defence, as well as training in the actual use of weapons," state news agency Xinhua said.

British jets intercept Russian aircraft over Norwegian Sea

Sriram Lakshman

LONDON

British F-35 jets, on Monday, escorted a Bear-F Russian aircraft that “repeatedly approached” the U.K.’s Carrier Strike Group in the Norwegian Sea and dropped sonobuoys near the aircraft carrier, according to the U.K.’s Ministry of Defence (MoD).

The incident occurred on the eve of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s (NATO) military alliance’s annual summit, scheduled to be held from July 7-8 in Turkey’s capital Ankara.

The Bear-F passed at “low altitude and unnecessarily close” to *HMS Prince of Wales* (part of the fleet), dropping a large number of sonobuoys in “close proximity” to the carrier, according to the U.K. MoD.



Air incident: A British Royal Navy F-35B fighter plane intercepts a Russian Tupolev ‘Bear-F’ aircraft over the Norwegian Sea. AFP

“The Russian aircraft was intercepted and escorted by two U.K. F-35 jets from *HMS Prince of Wales* until it left the area,” the statement said.

Sonobuoys are devices using sonar to detect submarines.

NATO’s Arctic Sentry

The Carrier Strike Group is deployed in the region as part of NATO’s Arctic Sen-

try, part of the alliance’s military posture in the Arctic and High North.

U.K. Defence Secretary Dan Jarvis and Iceland’s Foreign Minister, Thorgerdur Katrin Gunnarsdottir, had visited *HMS Prince of Wales* over the weekend.

Mr. Jarvis is reportedly hoping to stay on in his post if Andy Burnham takes the reins at No.10 Downing Street.

NATO defence push strains Europe's budgets

Reuters

London, July 6

NATO SECRETARY General Mark Rutte will insist at this week's alliance summit that member states are keeping their promise to boost defence spending. Yet progress has been uneven and push is already stretching some national budgets.

Under pressure from President Donald Trump, members of the 32-country military pact agreed at last year's summit to boost defence spending to 5% of GDP by 2035 - just over double the overall level for European states and Canada in 2025.

But since then, two camps

have emerged: one is led by Germany and the mostly Nordic and eastern European nations which have found the fiscal space to raise spending; in the other are several big players struggling to do the same.

"The UK isn't managing, for example. France isn't and Italy isn't either," Guntram Wolff, senior fellow at the Bruegel economics think tank, said of the three largest economies in Europe behind Germany.

NATO says its European members plus Canada spent an extra \$90 billion on defence in real terms last year compared to 2024 as they seek to raise core military spending to 3.5% of GDP by 2035 with a further 1.5% GDP on security-related items.

• NATO SUMMIT STARTS TODAY

WHICH LEADERS WILL BE THERE?:

Leaders from NATO's 32 member countries, including Trump. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, South Korean President Lee Jae Myung will join the dinner on Tuesday evening.

WHAT WILL LEADERS DISCUSS?:

Progress towards defence spending targets, boosting defence industrial production and how to implement "burden-shifting" from the US to Europe.

WHAT WILL THE ALLIANCE DO ON INDUSTRY?:

To focus on scaling up weapons production and boosting defence innovation. Will also host a defence industry



A Turkish flag & NATO banner cover buildings ahead of the summit in Ankara, Turkey. AP

forum in Ankara.

WILL IRAN COME UP?: Members are concerned that the Iran war, and Trump's irritation with Europe over its response to it, could overshadow the summit.