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दैनिक सामयिक अभिज्ञता सेवा
A Daily Current Awareness Service

Vol. 45 No. 12 16 January 2020



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Su-30 squadron to be inducted at Thanjavur on Jan 20

Thiruvananthapuram: The induction ceremony of a Su-30 MKI squadron in the southern skies will take place in the presence of Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu on January 20, said a top Air Force official here on Wednesday.

The range of this will be in the Indian ocean region up to Suez Canal.

The development and integration of the weapon with aircraft was the result of the dedicated and synergetic efforts of the Indian Air Force (IAF), DRDO, BAPL and HAL, and will hugely enhance the operational capability of the force.

Air Marshal Amit Tiwari, AVSM VMA Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Southern Air Command said to the media here that the newly resurrected 222 Squadron will be operationalised with BrahMos equipped Sukhoi-30 air superiority fighters with twin engine.

"The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) which is a central maritime spread, bordering three continents, has an important role to play in regional peace, security and prosperity. The IAF is an intrinsically strategic force and is all set to extend the reach into the vast IOR," said Tiwari and added that the need for such surveillance was the need of the hour.

"The Thiruvananthapuram Air Force airbase will play a crucial role in this. Expansion plans here are on the anvil and additional land is being acquired, next to the present base. We expect to complete the expansion in around four year's time," added Air Marshal Tiwari.

The 222 Squadron, also known as "Tigersharks" was raised at Air Force Station, Ambala on September 15, 1969 with Sukhoi Su-7 aircraft.

In July 1971, the Squadron moved to Air Force Station Halwara and took part in the 1971 war with Pakistan.

The squadron was recognised for its heroic efforts during the war and was awarded one Mahavir Chakra, three Vir Chakras, three Vayu Sena Medals and two Mention-in Dispatches.

In December 1985, the "Tigersharks" became the first Squadron in the IAF equipped with Mig-27 Aircraft.

The Squadron was number plated in 2011.

The "Tigersharks", equipped with formidable, state-of-the-art air superiority fighter aircraft, which are armed with 2.5 ton air launched Brahmos missile of 300 Kms range, have the capability to strike from large stand-off ranges on any target at sea or on land with pin-point accuracy by day or night and in all weather conditions.

The capability of the missile coupled with superlative performance of the Su-30 MKI is all set to change the paradigm of maritime surveillance, security and strike in the region.

Air Marshal Tiwari welcomed the appointment of the Chief of Defence Staff and termed it as a good move.

(Disclaimer: This story has not been edited by Outlook staff and is auto-generated from news agency feeds. Source: IANS)

<https://www.outlookindia.com/newscroll/su30-squadron-to-be-inducted-at-thanjavur-on-jan-20/1709024>

Thu, 16 Jan 2020

India's Cabinet Committee on security approves weapon and sensor package for four destroyers

By Rahul Bedi

New Delhi: India's Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) has approved an INR61.50 billion (USD867.5 million) weapon and sensor package for four 7,300-tonne guided-missile destroyers that are currently being built for the Indian Navy (IN) by the state-owned Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) in Mumbai.

Official sources told *Jane's* that the CCS cleared the procurement of the anti-ship variant of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile in late December 2019, along with the long-range surface-to-air missile (LRSAM) version of the Barak-8 air-defence system for fitment onto the future Visakhapatnam (Project15B)-class destroyers to engage coastal, sea-based, and aerial targets.

IN sources said the four destroyers will be armed with an extended range variant of the BrahMos anti-ship missile, the range of which will exceed 292 km. Each destroyer will be capable of carrying up to 16 of these missiles, which will be launched from two eight-cell vertical launch systems (VLSs).

The interception range of the supersonic Barak-8 LRSAM has also been increased from 70 km to around 100 km, according to naval sources. Each of the destroyers will be capable of carrying up to 32 LRSAMs.

The vessels will also be equipped with the Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) ELM-2248 MF-STAR multifunction active electronically scanned array (AESA) radar and the ELM-2238 STAR surveillance and threat alert radar.

The CCS is also believed to have approved equipping the destroyers with a 127 mm gun and Russian-made RBU-6000 Smerch-2 rocket launchers.

Official sources said the recently approved weapon and sensor package will increase the overall cost of Project 15B from INR296.44 billion to INR357.94 billion.

Project 15B was approved in 2011 as a follow-on to Project 15A under which MDL built three Kolkata-class destroyers, the last of which was commissioned in late 2016.

Designed by the IN's Directorate of Naval Design, with Russia's Severnoye Design Bureau as a consultant, the Project 15B's lead ship, *Visakhapatnam*, is expected to enter service in 2021–22, following a four-year delay. The three follow-on platforms are likely to be delivered annually thereafter.

Powered by four Ukrainian-made Zorya-Mashproekt DT-59 gas turbines, the destroyers, which can also carry two multirole helicopters, are capable of achieving speeds of more than 30 kt.

<https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/1964187>

Navy to rejig acquisition plans with eye on technological advancements & fiscal prudence

By Rajat Pandit

New Delhi: In keeping with futuristic weapon technologies, coupled with the need for fiscal prudence, the Navy has gone in for a major rationalization and re-prioritization of its long-term force level plans and arms procurement projects.

Defence ministry sources say the Navy is the first among the armed forces to finalize a rationalization plan for its capital acquisition projects, which ranges from withdrawing some tenders or Request for Proposals (RFPs) to reducing numbers in other mega programmes. “The Defence Acquisitions Council (DAC), to be chaired by defence minister Rajnath Singh on January 17, will discuss all this,” said a source.

Navy chief Admiral Karambir Singh had himself recently declared his force was “committed to progress modernization using available resources optimally”. The Navy would endeavor to get the “maximum bang for the buck, with prioritization, rationalization and economy of expenditure”, he said.

The maritime force currently has 125 warships and 15 diesel-electric and two nuclear submarines, along with 235 aircraft, helicopters and drones. Given the budget constraints, it would be reasonably happy to become a 175-warship force by 2027 despite the earlier 212-warship plan.

For starters, the RFP for the construction of four large amphibious warfare warships or landing platform docks (LPDs) at a cost of over Rs 20,000 crore by the Indian private sector is going to get scrapped. “The Navy requires LPDs but the existing RFP was based on technical parameters drawn over 12-13 years ago. New up-to-date technical specifications will be drawn for a fresh RFP,” said a source.

The long-pending mega project to build 12 Mine Counter-Measure Vessels (MCMVs), or warships designed to detect, track and destroy enemy mines, at the Goa Shipyard for Rs 32,000 crore will also get slashed. “The project will be limited to eight MCMVs now. A hunt for unmanned minesweepers will also be launched in keeping with technological advancements around the world,” said the source.

Another step will be to cut down the Rs 3,621 crore acquisition of 10 Kamov-31 AEW (airborne early warning) helicopters from Russia to six choppers, while the force will also drop the case for a survey training vessel.

TOI was the first to report last November that the Navy’s case for 10 more Poseidon-8I long-range maritime patrol aircraft from the US had also been reduced to just six planes for around \$1.8 billion. These six P-8Is will add to the 12 such “submarine hunting” aircraft already ordered from the US at a cost of over \$3.1 billion.

The reduction in the P-8I aircraft will be offset by the proposed acquisition of 30 weaponized Sea Guardian or Predator-B armed drones from the US, with 10 drones each for Navy, IAF and Army to hunt and destroy targets on land and sea.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/fund-hit-navy-set-to-scrap-20000-crore-tender/articleshow/73285506.cms>

Integrated battle groups concept being given shape in 17 Corps: Army Commander

"To meet the current challenges in the northern borders, we are organising ourselves in the form of integrated battle groups," Lt Gen Chauhan, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command said. "What we are looking at is the organisation of formations which are more deployable, more employable and more capable to perform the tasks," he said

Kolkata: The concept of Integrated Battle Groups (IBG) is being given shape in the newly-raised 17 Corps to meet the current challenges in the northern borders, Eastern Command chief Lt Gen Anil Chauhan said on Wednesday.

He said the Army has done a few exercises to validate the concept of IBGs as to what should be the organisation and structure of it, which the 17 Corps, the country's first Mountain Strike Corps, performed. The 17 Corps carried out 'Him-Vijay', a mega exercise at a height of around 15,000 ft in Arunachal Pradesh in October last year. "To meet the current challenges in the northern borders, we are organising ourselves in the form of integrated battle groups," Lieutenant General Chauhan, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command, told reporters.

"What we are looking at is the organisation of formations which are more deployable, more employable and more capable to perform the tasks," he said.

Chauhan said that the Indian Army structures are more a legacy of the British Army and they were probably organised to fight in the longest kind of wars in distant lands.

To meet the present day challenges and take care of India's geostrategic needs, the first reorganisation was carried out in the 1980s when the infantry division, which contains combat and logistic support elements, was reorganised into a rapid division, that included some portions of mechanised infantry.

Following a status quo thereafter, the Army has again embarked upon reorganising its formations, he said after a solemn wreath laying ceremony on Army Day at the Eastern Command headquarter, Fort William, here.

"We are looking at 17 Corps primarily in the initial phases, we have done some exercises to validate this concept of IBGs - what should be the organisation, structure and that has been done," he said.

Chauhan said that as far as the operational situation is concerned, the northern border has remained quiet last year due to the Wuhan summit of April, 2018 and the Chennai summit in October, 2019.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping held their first informal summit in Wuhan to exchange views on issues of bilateral and global importance and reviewed developments in India-China relations from the strategic and long-term perspective.

They held their second informal summit in Chennai where they exchanged views on outstanding issues, including on the boundary question.

"Peace is being maintained without compromising our legitimate claims or position at the Line of Actual Control (LAC)," the Eastern Command chief said. India shares nearly 4,000-km-long border with China in the north. Troops of India and China were locked in a 73-day standoff in Doklam from June 16, 2017 after the Indian side stopped building of a road in the area by the Chinese Army. The face-off ended on August 28.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/integrated-battle-groups-concept-being-given-shape-in-17-corps-army-commander/articleshow/73269753.cms>

Experts advise against inducting foreign chopper

AJAI SHUKLA

New Delhi, 15 January

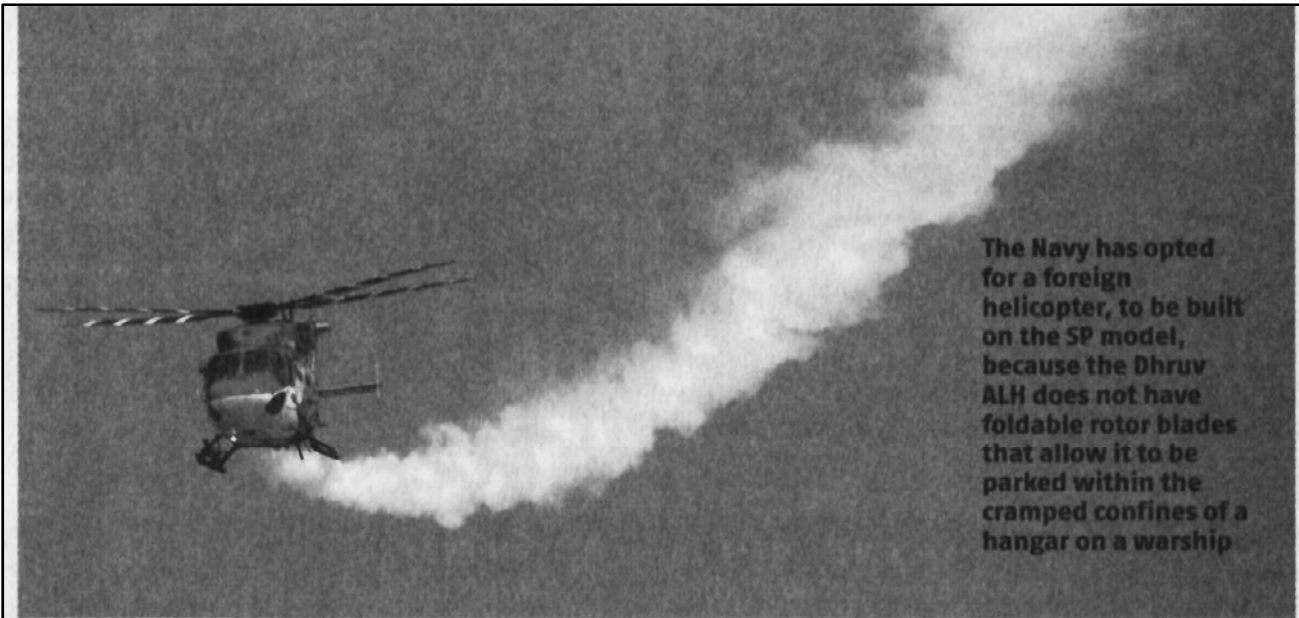
With the Ministry of Defence (MoD) poised to sanction on Friday a ₹21,738-crore project to build 111 naval utility helicopters (NUH) in an Indian private sector firm, a MoD expert has suggested the project be scrapped.

The MoD and the Navy want the NUH to be a foreign helicopter, built through the strategic partner (SP) model. This involves selecting a deep-pocketed Indian private firm as the SP, which will build the helicopters in India using technology supplied by a separately selected foreign original equipment manufacturer (OEM).

However, former integrated defence staff chief, Vice Admiral Raman Puri (retired), who the department of defence production has appointed as consultant, has advised against inducting a foreign helicopter as NUH, when defence public sector unit Hindustan Aeronautics (HAL) is in a position to supply a naval version of its indigenous Dhruv advanced light helicopter (ALH).

Puri has recommended the indigenous Dhruv chopper over a foreign design, citing Para 23 of Chapter II of the Defence Procurement Policy of 2016 (DPP-2016), which states: "Preference will be given to indigenous design, development, and manufacture of defence equipment. Therefore, whenever the required arms, ammunition, and equipment are possible to be made by the Indian industry, within the timelines required by the services, the procurement will be made from Indian sources."

On November 19, the MoD asked



The Navy has opted for a foreign helicopter, to be built on the SP model, because the Dhruv ALH does not have foldable rotor blades that allow it to be parked within the cramped confines of a hangar on a warship

HAL for its comments. HAL has replied that it is “generally in agreement with the viewpoints provided by the consultant”.

Puri also pointed out that Para 23 states: “Accordingly the (MoD’s) categorisation committee, while considering categorisation under the DPP will follow a preferred order of categorisation,” in which ‘Buy (Indian-IDDMM)’ is top priority. IDDMM is the acronym for ‘Indian Designed, Developed and Manufactured’, a criterion the Dhruv ALH meets.

HAL has pointed out to the MoD that the Dhruv ALH has been in operation with the Navy and Coast Guard for about two decades. It notes: “ALH has proved its robustness in all operating conditions, as validated by accruing more than 260,000 flying hours and (flying) more than 280 helicopters in the services of various customers.”

The Navy has opted for a foreign helicopter, to be built on the SP model, because the Dhruv ALH does not have foldable rotor blades that allow it to be parked within the cramped confines of a hangar on a warship.

But HAL’s response to the MoD states: “The design of ALH is such that role change can be achieved with minimum modifications and minimum time, which will enable the navy to use this helicopter...”

HAL wrote that, while it did not earlier possess technology for foldable blades for the Dhruv, it “initiated a project with internal funding to design and develop a blade/tail boom folding mechanism on the ALH, which will meet the stowage requirements of the NUH”.

HAL executives say foldable blades can be easily developed in two-three years, a period shorter than what the

MoD will take to sign a global NUH contract.

HAL’s letter also notes that the tender requires the foreign OEM to transfer nine critical technologies, which include a rotor system, transmission system, hydraulics, self-sealing fuel tanks, vibration isolation system and others. “All these critical technologies are available with HAL in the case of the ALH-based NUH, as it is HAL’s own development,” says HAL’s letter, which Business Standard has reviewed.

HAL also claims that “many other critical and advanced technologies (are) available with HAL, like the avionics system, glass cockpit, composite airframe technologies, etc.”

Puri’s recommendations also reflect his opinion that it would be wasteful to buy a foreign helicopter, pay for transfer of technology (ToT), and develop manufacturing capabili-

ty in an Indian private sector SP when all this already exists with HAL.

He has pointed out that the SP's new manufacturing line would have no work after building 111 NUHs for the Navy. The 'transfer of technology' cost paid to the OEM and the cost of setting up a new NUH production line would make a foreign NUH far more expensive than the Dhruv, which HAL already manufactures in Bengaluru.

"Since the ALH-based NUH is conceived, designed, and developed by HAL, there is no necessity for any ToT and thus a substantial amount of foreign exchange... can be saved," HAL has argued.

HAL has also pointed out that it would be able to integrate weapons and sensors to meet the Navy's requirements in the future, upgrade the platform at any stage in its lifecycle, resolve technical issues and carry out 'obsolescence management', which involves ensuring the supply of spare parts all through its service life.

Puri's intervention and HAL's argument will not be welcomed by private sector firms who have responded to the MoD's NUH tender. These include Tata Advanced Systems, Adani Defence, Mahindra Defence, Reliance Defence, and the Kalyani Group. In addition, HAL submitted two responses — one in its individual capacity and another in a joint venture with Russian Helicopters called Indo-Russian Helicopters.

The foreign helicopters in the fray include two Airbus helicopters — the AS 565 Mbe (Panther) and the H145M — as well as US firm Sikorsky's S76D and the Russian Kamov 226T. The Panther is regarded as the front runner.

Army Chief targets Pak, says scrapping 370 secured LoC

'Historic step nixed plans of western neighbour, its proxies'

New Delhi: Army Chief Gen M M Naravane on Wednesday hailed the abrogation of provisions of Article 370 as a "historic step" and said the move had disrupted plans of the "western neighbour and its proxies", in a clear reference to Pakistan.

The armed forces have "zero tolerance against terrorism", he said at the 72nd Army Day function held at the Cariappa Parade Ground in Delhi Cantonment. "We have many options to counter those who promote terrorism and we will not hesitate to use them," he said.

On August 5 last year, the Centre abrogated provisions of Article 370 that gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcated the state into union territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh, both of which officially came into being on October 31.

"The abrogation of Article 370 is a historic step. It will prove to be important in integrating Jammu and Kashmir in the national mainstream. This decision has disrupted the plans of our western neighbour and its proxies," the Army chief said.

General Naravane said the country had to face some security challenges last year.

"Not only did it counter proxy war but also other situations. Whether it is the LoC or LAC, we have ensured security with activeness and strength," he said, adding that the situation at the northern borders (China border) is relatively peaceful.

The Army Chief said the situation along the LoC is linked to the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. "Today, we remember those who have made ultimate sacrifice for the country. It will keep inspiring the coming generations," he said.

Mentioning his visit to Siachen last week, he said he was extremely happy to see all the ranks brimming with confidence at the post. "In the last few days, some of our soldiers achieved martyrdom due to avalanche. We will always remember their sacrifice," he noted.

On the insurgency in the Northeast, he said the Army and the Assam Rifles had worked together and "the situation has improved a lot" in the region. Attending the Army Day parade for the first time as the Army Chief, he also said the "forces' eyes are also on the future warfare" and the planned Indian Army's Integrated Battle Groups (IBGs) was an important step to face challenges that might come up later. He said the Army's "niche capabilities" were also being enhanced.

The Army Day is celebrated on January 15 every year to mark Lt Gen K M Cariappa taking over as commander-in-chief of the Indian Army in 1949 from General Francis Bucher, the last British commander-in-chief of India.

Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat, Air Chief Marshal R K S Bhadauria and Navy Chief Admiral Karambir Singh and were also present on the occasion. Before arriving at the parade ground, the three services chiefs and the Chief of Defence Staff paid homage to martyrs at the National War Memorial. Last year, the Army especially focused on the next of kin of the defence personnel so that the jawans could focus on their primary jobs, Naravane said, adding that the "next of kin of jawans will always be on our priorities".

Captain Tania Shergill, the first woman Parade Adjutant, led all-men contingents during the parade, drawing praise from senior officers and loud cheers from the audience. — PTI

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/army-chief-targets-pak-says-scrapping-370-secured-loc-26832>

Chinese Navy in Indian Ocean: There have been instances when we had to tell them to go back, says Indian Navy Chief

"We have placed our ships in mission-based deployments so that we get an idea what are the activities, not only of China but of all other countries, so that if there is anything that impinges on our national interest or sovereignty, we will have to act," Navy Chief said

New Delhi: The Chinese Navy's presence is rapidly increasing in the Indian Ocean region and the Indian Navy is keeping a watch on the developments through "mission-based" deployments, Navy Chief Admiral Karambir Singh said on Wednesday.

The Navy chief asserted that China's Belt and Road Initiative and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor impinge on India's sovereignty.

Speaking at a panel discussion at the Raisina Dialogue here, he also said that there have been instances when People's Liberation Army (PLA) ships have entered India's exclusive economic zones and the Navy has told them that it impinges on Indian interests.

Asked if China has abided by India's assertions when such incidents have taken place, Admiral Singh said in one such incident, recently, "we acted then, they respected and moved out".

His remarks were in reference to the incident in which a Chinese naval ship was driven away from India's Exclusive Economic Zone in the Andaman sea.

The Chinese Navy is the strategic arm of the PLA and it has grown at a very rapid pace, Admiral Singh said.

We are all aware of the numbers, the tonnage, the number of ships, everything that is growing. We have seen in the Indian Ocean region itself starting 2008 when they came in for the anti-piracy patrol.

"Before that they weren't really very obvious in the Indian Ocean region but now you find that at any given time, 7 to 8 PLA warships in that area," he said.

Djibouti is a reality, Gwadar is on and more places are to come, he said, speaking on China's growing presence.

"We have placed our ships in mission-based deployments so that we get an idea what are the activities, not only of China but of all other countries, so that if there is anything that impinges on our national interest or sovereignty, we will have to act," Singh said.

"To my mind if there is any maritime activity that deviates from the norm or rule-based order, that can cause regional instability. That is what we are looking for," he said.

Besides Admiral Singh, Japan's Joint Staff of Self-Defense Forces Gen. Koji Yamazaki, Australia's Vice Chief of the Defence Force Adm. David Johnston, France's Deputy Director General for International Relations and Strategy, Ministry of Armed Forces Gen. Luc de Rancourt, and the UK's Chief of Naval Staff Adm. Tony Radakin, took part in the panel discussion.

Talking about the Quad grouping, comprising the United States, Australia, Japan and India, Adm. Johnston said it is a shared enterprise between like-minded democracies.

Adm Singh said the Quad will evolve organically because there was a common understanding among its members of what they want as the end goal.

On the Indo-Pacific, he said such constructs are not against anybody but for something.

Gen Kozi Yamazaki of Japan said that from a military point of view, it is necessary to closely cooperate with countries that share common values.

Adm Tony Radakin said that the UK has responded in a much stronger way in the last two to three years than over the previous decade to protect the rules based international order, particularly freedom of navigation in the South China Sea and the Straits of Taiwan.

Gen Luc de Rancourt of France said his country has a long-standing presence in Djibouti, and has observed the Chinese arrival in the region, but is confident that the France-Djibouti relationship is strong.

Gen Yamazaki said the Japan-US alliance is crucial for stability in the region.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/chinese-navy-in-indian-ocean-there-have-been-instances-when-we-had-to-tell-them-to-go-back-says-indian-navy-chief/articleshow/73277857.cms>

THEWEEK

Thu, 16 Jan 2020

Gaganyaan astronauts to leave for Russia this month for 11-month training

Four test pilots of IAF have been selected for the mission

By Rekha Dixit

The training of the four test pilots of the Indian Air Force who have been selected for the Gaganyaan mission is scheduled to start this month, Jitendra Singh, minister of state, Prime Ministers Office, who also holds the space portfolio, said. The training will take place in Russia and will last for 11 months. After this intensive training, the astronauts will complete the training on the module back in India.

The India leg of the module training will include learning everything about the crew and service modules designed by Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). The space vehicle that ISRO has designed comprises of a crew module, which will house the astronaut, and a service module, which is the uninhabited part of the spacecraft that has the instrumentation and equipment like oxygen tanks. The service module gets separated from the crew module at the end of the mission and usually burns out in the atmosphere.

The prototype of Gaganyaan which ISRO made public is similar to the Russian designs. Russia was not only the pioneer in space travel, but as of date, it is the only country which has the capability of sending astronauts to the International Space Station. China has also sent 14 people to space, some to its own space station, Tiangong 2, since 2003. Its last human space flight was in 2016. The design of its spacecraft also resembles the Russian one. However, China's space programme remains insular.

The Gaganyaan mission comprises of three flights, the first two unmanned. The first of the flights is scheduled for the end of this year. The human flight is aimed for 2022, to coincide with the 75 anniversary of India's independence. ISRO chairman K. Sivan recently said that only one astronaut would fly on this debut flight. This is as per international tradition. Even erstwhile USSR sent only one space traveller, Yuri Gagarin, on the maiden flight.

Previously, it was believed that the crew would comprise three men. ISRO had said the module was being designed to carry three. The announcement that there would be only one astronaut was made just a few days ago. Four men, however, will undergo all the training. These were recently selected from the ten who were initially identified last year. Their identities, however, cannot be revealed, said the government. ISRO set up the Human Space Flight Centre in January 2019 for end-to-end training for

human space flight missions. There was much speculation when Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced in 2018 that a son or daughter of India would go to space by 2022. Given the boost Modi has provided to women, like all-women parade contingents at Republic Day and training women as fighter pilots, there was speculation that at least one of the astronauts might be a woman. But since initial crews are generally selected from a pool of test pilots and India has no women in this cadre yet, the choice was only men. Sivan, however, has told this correspondent that while the criterion is rather rigid for the debut flight, once there is an established programme, several others could get the opportunity to fly—men and women both, and from varied professions.

The government has sanctioned Rs 10,000 crore for Gaganyaan. Organisations across the country are working on various aspects of the mission, from instrumentation to crew equipment, food to fuel. ISRO had a prototype of the space suit ready, which was designed internally. However, this being the first flight, it has decided to go with a Russian made space suit now. The bio vest, which will monitor the astronaut's vital statistics continuously, however is being designed by the Defence Research Development Organisation.

<https://www.theweek.in/news/sci-tech/2020/01/15/gaganyaan-astronauts-to-leave-for-russia-this-month-for-11-month.html>