New milestone: India's nuclear triad at full strength

Defence · 6 October 2026 · https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/current-affairs-english/2026/10/06



News

October 2026 reports note that India's **nuclear triad**, the ability to deliver nuclear weapons from **land, air and sea**, is now fully operational. The key step was **INS Aridhaman**, India's third nuclear ballistic-missile submarine, commissioned at Visakhapatnam on **3 April 2026**. With three SSBNs, one can always be on patrol, making **continuous at-sea deterrence (CASD)** possible (this is the assessment of media and analysts; the government does not publish details).

Key facts

Land	**Agni** missiles; Agni-5 **MIRV** test, **Mission Divyastra (March 2024)**; rail-launched Agni-Prime
Air	**Rafale, Mirage-2000, Su-30MKI** fighters
Sea	Arihant-class SSBNs: **INS Arihant (2016), INS Arighaat (2024), INS Aridhaman (2026)**
Aridhaman	About **7,000 tonnes**; **8 launch tubes**, 8 K-4 (3,500 km) or 24 K-15 Sagarika (750 km)
Control	**Nuclear Command Authority (NCA)**, Political Council chaired by the PM; **Strategic Forces Command (SFC, 2003)**

Background

- **Nuclear doctrine (2003): credible minimum deterrence**, **No First Use**, no use against non-nuclear states, and 'massive' retaliation if attacked.
- **Tests: Pokhran-I 'Smiling Buddha' (18 May 1974)**; **Pokhran-II 'Operation Shakti' (11 and 13 May 1998)**; 11 May is National Technology Day.
- **First triad:** the sea leg became operational when INS Arihant finished its first **deterrence patrol** in 2018. The few countries with a full triad include the USA, Russia, China and India.
- **Second-strike capability:** submarines hidden under the sea can strike back even after an enemy's first strike; this is what makes deterrence credible.

Tamil Nadu link: INS Kattabomman, the Navy's **Very Low Frequency (VLF)** station for talking to submarines, has worked at **Vijayanarayanam, Tirunelveli district**, since 1990. The 'K' missiles honour 'Missile Man' **Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam** of **Rameswaram**. **Kalpakkam** (Chengalpattu) hosts the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research and the PFBR.

Shanmugam IAS Academy – your next step

- **Courses:** TNPSC Group 1, 2 / 2A (Prelims + Mains), Group 4, UPSC / IAS – Coimbatore · Madurai · Online – https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/fees
- **Books (PDF):** TNPSC PYQ books, UPSC books – https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/study-materials
- **Free quiz + daily PDFs:** https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/free-pdf-download · All news of this day: https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/current-affairs-english/2026/10/06

Admissions – call / WhatsApp: 99941 46662 · 99944 27714 · www.shanmugamiasacademy.in