Indian Navy marks 50 years of long-range maritime reconnaissance

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News

The Indian Navy marked the Golden Jubilee of its Long-Range Maritime Reconnaissance (LRMR) operations on 18 November 2026, the Defence Ministry (PIB) said. The milestone coincides with the 50th anniversary of the commissioning of Indian Naval Air Squadron (INAS) 312, the 'Albatross'. After the 1971 war, the need for shore-based maritime patrol aircraft that could work with ships and helicopters led the Navy to take charge of long-range maritime reconnaissance. On 18 November 1976, INAS 312 was commissioned at INS Hansa, Goa, with five Lockheed Super Constellation aircraft transferred from the Indian Air Force. The Ilyushin Il-38 was inducted in 1977 and the Tupolev Tu-142M in 1988; the Boeing P-8I arrived at INS Rajali, Arakkonam, in 2013. These aircraft have supported Operations Cactus, Vijay, Parakram and Sindoor, besides anti-piracy and search-and-rescue missions. Today P-8Is of INAS 312 at INS Rajali, Arakkonam, and INAS 316 at INS Hansa, Goa, keep watch over the Indian Ocean.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Event	Golden Jubilee of Long-Range Maritime Reconnaissance (LRMR)
Date	18 Nov 2026
Squadron	INAS 312 'Albatross' – 18 Nov 1976, INS Hansa, Goa

Point	Details
First aircraft	5 Lockheed Super Constellations (from IAF)
Later aircraft	Il-38 (1977), Tu-142M (1988), Boeing P-8I (2013)
Present bases	INAS 312 – INS Rajali, Arakkonam; INAS 316 – INS Hansa, Goa
Operations	Cactus, Vijay, Parakram, Sindoor; anti-piracy, SAR
Tu-142M retired	2017 – now a museum at Visakhapatnam

Background

- Defence: long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft locate ships and submarines over vast sea areas, acting as the Navy's 'distant eyes'. The P-8I was built by US firm Boeing on its 737 airliner; India was its first export customer. It provides wide-area surveillance, anti-submarine warfare and maritime strike capability.
- History: lessons of the 1971 India–Pakistan war led the Navy to build its own patrol air arm. The Il-38 and Tu-142M, obtained from the Soviet Union, reflect Cold War-era India–Soviet defence ties. After about 29 years of service, the Tu-142M retired in 2017 and was turned into a museum on Beach Road, Visakhapatnam.
- Geography and law: under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS, 1982), a coastal State's territorial sea extends to 12 nautical miles, the contiguous zone to 24 nm and the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) to 200 nm. India's EEZ spans over 2 million sq km, so long-range aircraft are essential to watch it.

Tamil Nadu link: INS Rajali at Arakkonam, Ranipet district, is the present base of INAS 312 'Albatross'; the P-8Is were inducted there in 2013. The Tu-142Ms also flew from here before retiring. The naval air station INS Parundu at Uchipuli, Ramanathapuram district, watches over the Palk Strait and Gulf of Mannar.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

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What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Event: Golden Jubilee of Long-Range Maritime Reconnaissance (LRMR); Date: 18 Nov 2026; Squadron: INAS 312 'Albatross' – 18 Nov 1976, INS Hansa, Goa; First aircraft: 5 Lockheed Super Constellations (from IAF).

What is the background to this news?

Defence: long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft locate ships and submarines over vast sea areas, acting as the Navy's 'distant eyes'.

Practice questions (with answers)

1. INS Hansa, the naval air station where INAS 312 'Albatross' was commissioned in 1976, is in which State?

A) Keralam

B) Maharashtra

C) Karnataka

D) Goa

Answer: D – Explanation: Goa (Dabolim). It now hosts INAS 316 flying P-8Is, while INAS 312 is based at INS Rajali, Arakkonam.

2. Which company makes the P-8I, the Indian Navy's long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft?

A) Lockheed Martin

B) Dassault Aviation

C) Boeing

D) Airbus

Answer: C – Explanation: Boeing (USA) – based on the 737; India was its first export customer. Dassault makes the Rafale.

3. The Navy's Tu-142M reconnaissance aircraft, retired in 2017, was turned into a museum in which city?

A) Visakhapatnam

B) Kochi

C) Chennai

D) Mumbai

Answer: A – Explanation: Visakhapatnam – on Beach Road, near the Kursura submarine museum. The aircraft had flown from INS Rajali, Arakkonam.

4. INS Parundu at Uchipuli, the naval air station watching the Palk Strait and Gulf of Mannar, is in which district?

A) Thoothukudi

B) Nagapattinam

C) Ramanathapuram

D) Pudukkottai

Answer: C – Explanation: Ramanathapuram – close to Rameswaram island. Drones and patrol aircraft operate from here.

5. Under UNCLOS, a coastal State's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) extends up to how far from the baseline?

A) 12 nautical miles

B) 24 nautical miles

C) 100 nautical miles

D) 200 nautical miles

Answer: D – Explanation: 200 nautical miles. The territorial sea is 12 nm and the contiguous zone 24 nm. India's EEZ exceeds 2 million sq km.

Sources: PIB – Ministry of Defence (18 Nov 2026, PRID 2337736); Indian Navy – indiannavy.nic.in. © Shanmugam IAS Academy.