



INS Jatayu in the Lakshadweep Islands

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Why in News?

The commissioning of INS Jatayu, an upgraded naval base in the [Lakshadweep Islands](#), marks a significant development in [India's maritime security strategy](#), particularly in the context of growing **Chinese influence in the [Indian Ocean Region](#)**.

- Additionally, the Indian Navy commissioned its **first [MH-60R multi-role helicopter squadron Indian Naval Air Squadron \(INAS\) 334](#)** at Kochi, a major capability boost for its rotary fleet and its anti-submarine warfare capabilities.

What are the Key Highlights of INS Jatayu?

- INS Jatayu, formerly **Naval Detachment Minicoy**, is commissioned as an upgraded naval base on Minicoy Island in the Lakshadweep archipelago.
 - It will operate under the operational control of the Naval Officer in Charge (Lakshadweep), Southern Naval Command.
- The base enhances the operational reach of the **Indian Navy** in the Indian Ocean, bolstering its capabilities for **[anti-piracy](#), [anti-narcotics](#), and [surveillance operations](#)**.
 - Situated in Minicoy, the southernmost atoll of the Lakshadweep archipelago, INS Jatayu strategically overlooks vital **[Sea Lines of Communications \(SLOCs\)](#)**, strengthening India's maritime presence in the region.
- In light of China's increasing presence in the Indian Ocean, INS Jatayu reinforces **India's ability to counterbalance and deter any attempts** to undermine its maritime dominance and territorial integrity.
- INS Jatayu will effectively be the **country's second naval base in Lakshadweep**. The Navy's first base on the islands, **INS Dweepprakshak** in Kavaratti, was commissioned in 2012.
- INS Jatayu will be equipped with additional infrastructure, including an airfield and personnel housing, to support naval operations and ensure comprehensive security coverage.
- Minicoy Island, where INS Jatayu is located, sits at the **intersection of crucial Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs)** like the **[Eight Degree Channel](#)** and the **Nine Degree Channel**, making it susceptible to maritime pollution due to heavy maritime traffic.
 - Eight Degree Channel separates **Indian Minicoy island from Maldives**.
 - The Nine Degree Channel separates the **island of Minicoy from the Lakshadweep archipelago**.

The Lakshadweep Islands

- India's smallest Union Territory, Lakshadweep ('a hundred thousand islands' in Sanskrit and Malayalam) is an archipelago consisting of **36 islands located between 220 km and 440 km from Kochi**.
- The islands, only 11 of which are inhabited, have a total area of only 32 sq km. It is directly under the control of the Centre through an administrator.
- The Lakshadweep is part of a **chain of coralline islands in the Indian Ocean that includes the Maldives to the south**, and the **Chagos archipelago farther beyond, to the south of**

the equator.

What are the Key Highlights of the INAS 334 Squadron?

- The Indian Naval Air Squadron (INAS) 334 is the first squadron of the **MH-60R helicopters**, also known as the "**Seahawks**". The squadron was commissioned at INS Garuda, Kochi.
- The squadron is a part of the 24-aircraft Foreign Military Sales (FMS) contract signed with the **United States government** in February 2020.
- The MH 60R Seahawk, a maritime variant of the Blackhawk helicopter, is designed for various roles including:
 - Anti-submarine warfare, Anti-surface warfare, Search and rescue , Medical evacuation and Vertical replenishment.
- Deployment of Seahawks in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) strengthens the Indian Navy's maritime presence, dissuading potential threats and ensuring a secure environment in this strategically crucial region.

Commands of Indian Navy:

It has **three operational and one theatre commands**. Each command is headed by a Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief holding the rank of Vice Admiral.

Command	Establishment	Headquarters	Area of Responsibility
Western Naval Command	1963	Mumbai	Arabian Sea, coastline Gujarat to Maharashtra, including Goa, Lakshadweep and Minicoy Islands
Eastern Naval Command	1971	Visakhapatnam	Bay of Bengal, coastline of Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu
Southern Naval Command	1951	Kochi	Indian Ocean, the coastline of Kerala, Karnataka, and Lakshadweep and Minicoy Islands

- **Andaman and Nicobar Command, 2001:** It is a **unified tri-services theatre command** based at Port Blair, A&N Islands.
 - It includes the **Indian Navy, Indian Army, Indian Air Force and Indian Coast Guard**.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q. Which one of the following pairs of islands is separated from each other by the 'Ten Degree Channel'? (2014)

- (a) Andaman and Nicobar
- (b) Nicobar and Sumatra
- (c) Maldives and Lakshadweep

(d) Sumatra and Java

Ans: (a)

Q2. Which one of the following is the best description of 'INS Astradharini', that was in the news recently? (2016)

- (a) Amphibious warfare ship
- (b) Nuclear-powered submarine
- (c) Torpedo launch and recovery vessel
- (d) Nuclear-powered aircraft carrier

Ans: (c)

Q3. Consider the following in respect of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS): (2017)

1. Inaugural IONS was held in India in 2015 under the chairmanship of the Indian Navy.
2. IONS is a voluntary initiative that seeks to increase maritime co-operation among navies of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (b)

Exp:

- The 'Indian Ocean Naval Symposium' (IONS) is a voluntary initiative that seeks to increase maritime cooperation among navies of the littoral States of the Indian Ocean Region by providing an open and inclusive forum for discussion of regionally relevant maritime issues. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- It provides a forum to increase maritime security cooperation, and promote friendly relationships among the member nations.
- The inaugural IONS-2008 was held in New Delhi, India in February, 2008. The Chief of the Naval Staff, Indian Navy was designated as the Chairman of IONS for the period 2008-10. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct. Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.**

Mains

Q. What do you understand by 'The String of Pearls'? How does it impact India? Briefly outline the steps taken by India to counter this. **(2013)**

Q. Discuss the political developments in the Maldives in the last two years. Should they be of any cause for concern to India? **(2013)**