

Made in India Submarines A History of 50 years (Part 2)



In the previous issue, we discussed the journey of India's quest for Make in India submarines, from the early 1970s to the mid-2000s. While the acquisition of the Type 209-1500, Kilo Class, and Kalvari Class addressed India's immediate requirement for the time being, it was still far from fully answering India's ambition. As the older Kalvari Class and Vela Class (Soviet origin Foxtrot Class) started being phased out, India's situation returned to square one. But the situation started getting worse without a steady flow of new submarines.

Project 75 India

To combat the fast dwindling submarine fleet strength and to address ever-evolving threats, India focuses on the acquisition of six modern submarines under P-75I. While exact requirements are not public, a more modern platform than the Kalvari Class is sought. The boats must have a very low acoustic signature, concealment from detection by anti-submarine platforms, advanced countermeasures, integration with a fuel cell-based AIP system, new generation sensors, modern weapon systems and high indigenous content. While the base of the programme was

cemented back in 1999, it made little progress in the next twenty years.

Finally, the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) approved indigenous construction under the Strategic Partnership (SP) model on 31 January 2019. The aim of such an approach is to ensure seamless transfer of niche technologies and higher indigenous content (than P-75), steering self-reliant investment in the future. The MoD issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) on 20 July 2021. Five Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) and two Indian strategic partners (MDL and L&T-Larsen & Toubro) were shortlisted. But for various reasons, only Germany (TKMS) and Spain (Navantia) remained in the race. In 2023, TKMS picked up MDL, while L&T became a partner of Navantia. The Spanish side offered their latest S-80 class platform equipped with Spanish (Bio-Ethanol Stealth Technology) BEST AIP. While the official offer from Germany was never made public, a render released resembled a redesigned Type 212 hull with angular features and an X-shaped rudder, indicating enhanced stealth, a reduced acoustic signature, and improved maneuverability.