

The Tribune, 1 April 2005

Seabird set to become operational (Vijay Mohan)

Karwar, March 31: Over 20 years after it was conceived, the Indian Navy's most ambitious project, Seabird is set to take to the sea, with its first establishment, the depot ship, scheduled to be commissioned here in early May. Once the project is complete, the base would be the largest naval establishment in the Asia-Pacific region. "The commissioning of the depot ship in the first week of May would mark the operationalisation of the base," Rear Admiral K. Mohanrao, Director-General, Project Seabird said. "The depot ship would co-ordinate the logistics and administrative requirements of the base," he added. Seabird would be the Indian Navy's third major base after Mumbai and Vishakapatnam. It would also be the country's first exclusive naval base, the other naval bases being co-located with commercial and civilian ports. Naval operations in other ports are hampered due to the movement of merchant vessels, which are often accorded priority by port authorities. Admiral Mohanrao said the base's location at the centre of the western seaboard gives the navy a strategic depth. It is also meant to decongest Mumbai, which is a prime target because of the commercial establishments located away from Mumbai. Under the "truncated" phase-I of the project, the base will have the capacity for docking 11 ships. The phase-I, which would be complete in 2006, had earlier envisioned docking facilities for 22 ships and 21 aircraft along with the requisite infrastructure. The remaining part of the first phase has been converted into Phase-II, the government approval for which has been accorded. Subsequent phases will be executed as and when the government's approval is accorded and funds are made available.

The Daily Times, 2 April 2005

India's Karwar naval base to be operational next week

NEW DELHI: 'Project Seabird', an advanced naval base and India's first ship-lift system, costing over Rs 25 billion will come into operational next week along the Arabian Sea coast, said an Indian news report on Friday. According to the report, the Indian Navy had exploited a natural harbour in Karwar to build the 11,200-acre base "Project Seabird" and Defence Minister Pranab Mukurjhee will inaugurate its first phase next week. With the base becoming operational, the Indian Navy will move its most lethal warships like the Stealth frigates and Goadavari to the new base, which will be 900 nautical miles from Karachi and over 1,500 nautical miles from Gwadar and Ormara, unlike Mumbai that is only 580 nautical miles, said the report. The report added that the base's facilities included a ship-lift that would enable the base to repair many warships simultaneously.

The Tribune, 2 April 2005

Naval aviation set for major boost (Vijay Mohan)

Goa, April 1: Indian Naval Aviation is set to get a massive boost in its combat as well as surveillance capability with several upgradation and procurement process in the pipeline. The most notable project to be taken up shortly is the upgradation of the Sea Harrier carrier-borne aircraft, which forms the cutting edge of the naval aviation's combat potential. Officers at INS Hansa here, the Navy's largest air station said that the most important aspect of the Sea Harrier upgradation would be arming them with beyond visual range air-to-air missiles. Israel's Rafael arms firm would be supplying an initial batch of 20 Derby missiles. At presently, the Harriers are armed with Matra Magic heat seeking missiles, which are close combat missiles and limit the aircraft's air-to-air combat capability. The Harrier's Blue Fox radar is being replaced with the Israeli Elta 2032 multimode fire control radar, to give it a longer tracking range and engage a greater number of targets simultaneously. The present radar, officers said, has problems in the "look-down" mode, which adversely affects engaging targets flying lower than the aircraft. The mission control computer and certain avionics are also to be upgraded.

The Tribune, 3 April 2005

Upgradation of patrol aircraft hangs fire (Vijay Mohan)

Goa, April 2: Upgradation of Tu-142 long-range maritime patrol aircraft continues to hang fire due to financial constraints for the past several years, putting a question mark over the Navy's surveillance and anti-surface warfare capabilities over waters far beyond the Indian coastline that are now deemed to be areas of vital national interest. Given their range of 12,500 km, payload carrying capacity of about 20,000 kg and extraordinary airspeed and service ceiling for a turbo-prop aircraft, these are the Navy's most important and valuable platforms for maritime surveillance and anti-submarine warfare. Procured from Russia in 1988, these aircraft require a comprehensive avionics and electronic warfare systems upgradation. The Navy has around 10 Tu-142s equipping INAS 312 at its Rajali air station, near Chennai.

The Times of India, 4 April 2005

Navy's own April Fool joke for country (JOSY JOSEPH)

NEW DELHI: It's supposed to be a sprawling cutting edge, crucial facility to hone the best young minds and bodies to take the Indian Navy into the next generation as a fighting machine. Even though it's been delayed for years, it's also supposed to be a showpiece for the force. Yet, instead of the President, who is the Supreme

Commander of the Indian armed forces, being called to inaugurate it, the Navy in its wisdom has asked Kerala CM Oommen Chandy to do the honours. There is speculation that the President may have deliberately been kept away, to keep the function low profile and away from media glare. For the Naval brass, it could turn out to be a wise decision, because there is simply very little to show off. If the President were to inaugurate, on his tour of the entire facility, the only major work he would have been shown is the cadet's mess, that too not yet complete. CM Chandy wouldn't need such elaborate honours and wouldn't embarrass the brass by asking awkward questions regarding completion, given the fact that his only relation with the new academy is that it is in his own state.

The Hindu, 5 April 2005

Pakistan to buy Chinese frigates (B. Muralidhar Reddy)

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 4: On the eve of the three-day bilateral visit of the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, Pakistan and China today concluded an agreement for the construction of four F-22P frigates for the Pakistan Navy. Mr. Wen Jiabao arrives here at the beginning of his South Asia tour. Besides delivering the key-note address on April 6 at the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), to be attended by representatives of 25 countries, he would hold talks with the Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf, and the Prime Minister, Shaukat Aziz. According to a statement by the Pakistani Defence Ministry, the agreement involves four separate contracts for the construction of the state of the art frigates with related equipment/systems with special element of Transfer of Technology (ToT). These ships will help make the seaward defence of Pakistan "impregnable," said the statement.

The Times of India, 8 April 2005

Navy's air arm flies high with fighters (RAJAT PANDIT)

NEW DELHI: The Navy's aging air arm is finally getting its much-needed booster dose. That Navy chief Admiral Arun Prakash is himself an aviator has only helped in administering the right medicine to bolster the force's air power. The Navy has now embarked on a mix of mid-life upgrades, planned inductions and new acquisitions of aircraft to emerge as "a true three-dimensional blue-water force", capable of furthering India's "political and geo-strategic objectives". First, the Navy is going in for upgradation of old warhorses like Sea Harrier jump-jet fighters and IL-38 long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft, Kamov-28 and Sea King anti-submarine warfare helicopters. The Cabinet Committee on Security last week approved upgradation of 14 Sea Harriers, inducted in 1983, which are deployed on the country's sole aircraft carrier INS Viraat. The Rs 476-crore upgradation package will include Israeli Elta EL/M-2032 multi-mode fire control radar and Derby beyond visual range air-to-air missiles for the fighters.

Dawn, 12 April 2005

Delhi begins work on aircraft carrier

NEW DELHI, April 11: India on Monday began an eight-year project to build an aircraft carrier in its most ambitious military programme to date, officials said. Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee launched the construction of the 37,500-ton carrier at the state-run Cochin Shipyard in the southern state of Kerala, a naval spokesman said. The carrier will carry 30 British- and Russian-made jet fighters as well as locally designed light combat aircraft which took India more than 22 years to develop. Federal Shipping Minister T.R. Balu said the ship-building yard would complete the project and hand over the carrier to the Indian navy by 2012.

The Tribune, 13 April 2005

Aircraft carrier at last: Navy has reason to feel happy

With steel cutting having begun for the building of an indigenous Air Defence Ship (ADS) at Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL), a project first conceived over 15 years ago finally has got underway. Realising the 37,500 tonne, 252-metre-long aircraft carrier project will put India among a small group of nations that can build their own aircraft carriers, and will be our key to a long range force projection over the waves, if not an actual blue water capability for the Indian Navy. To rule the waves, the Navy is fond of saying, you have to rule the skies above, and the depths below. Some might question the need for such force projection, but clearly, the emerging security environment in no way obviates the need for a country like India to maintain a broad spectrum of strategic land, sea, and air platforms. Old realpolitik imperatives continue to persist in the way international relations are conducted, and the need to protect our sea lanes and closely monitor what is happening in the Indian Ocean will only increase in a world characterized by more global links and exchanges on the one hand, and the rise of many non-conventional threats on the other.

The Indian Express, 13 April 2005

US offers to train Indian Navy for Adm Gorshkov (MANOJ K. DAS)

KOCHI, APRIL 12: The US has offered to train Indian naval pilots in complex carrier-based operations to ready them for operating from INS Vikramaditya - formerly Admiral Gorshkov - which will reach India by 2007-08. The offer has come as a surprise as no US hardware is on the Navy's radar. India has no plans to immediately acquire

any US naval system as the country is planning a bouquet of Russian MiG-29Ks and Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) on all future floating platforms. In fact, the Air Defence Ship (ADS) being built in Kochi has been designed to operate MiG-29Ks and UK-made Sea Harriers along with the LCAs. The US offer, sources said, was made during the recent visit of Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Arun Prakash. The Navy, however, has not fully finalised the module and pattern of deployment. Sources said future aviators who will operate on aircraft carriers have been shortlisted. "We have identified pilots who will fly from Gorshkov. Another generation will inherit this training by the time the ADS is ready by 2012. A training module in Russia will begin later this year or in early 2006," sources said.

The Indian Express, 13 April 2005

Goa naval base to be ready for MiG-29Ks (RAJU NAYAK)

PANAJI, APRIL 12: The naval base at Goa will be expanded to make room for the Navy's largest fleet of MiG-29Ks that the force plans to acquire soon. Vice-Admiral Madanjit Singh said the Navy will first buy 40 of these aircraft at a cost of \$32 million. The contract details will be worked out once the Russian-made aircraft carriers arrive in the country. Altogether three aircraft carriers will be inducted by the Navy. The delivery of the first one is scheduled for 2007 and the other in 2008, the latter being a major modified carrier. The third one will be indigenously built and be available in the next 7-8 years. Singh, who was at the INS Hansa base in Vasco to attend the Tropex 2005 - a major exercise being conducted by the Western Naval Command - also said that the Karwar base would be inaugurated on May 9.

The Tribune, 16 April 2005

Indigenous air defence ship

Work on the country's first indigenous aircraft carrier started recently with a "steel-cutting" ceremony at Kochi by Minister of Shipping, Road Transport and Highways T.R. Balu. The Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Arun Prakash, was also present. The Chief of Naval Staff stated that the design and construction of such an air defence ship would mark the "coming of age" of our indigenous warship building capabilities. "As we cut steel today, we join an elite club of just six other nations which are able to conceptualise and then realise an endeavour of such dimensions and complexity," he added. The minister said that the government wanted to bring the maritime sector, including ship-building, onto the centrestage of development. "This project is an example in this direction," he added and stressed the need to follow countries like China in this field. The Navy's own Directorate of Naval Design (DND) has designed this ship, which will be built using integrated hull outfit and painting methodology. Another significant feature of this ship is that it will be the first warship to be built with quality steel developed in India by DRDO and SAIL.

The Tribune, 25 April 2005

Air defence ship to be ready by 2012

New Delhi, April 24: Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee on Thursday informed the Lok Sabha that the government had approved the indigenous construction of an air defence ship (ADS) of approximately 37,500 metric tonnes at Cochin Shipyard Limited, Kochi, for the Indian Navy. The revised cost of the construction of the ADS is Rs 2880 crore and the construction of the aircraft carrier is likely to be completed by 2011-12, he said. He said the government had not taken a final decision on the proposal for construction of Scorpene submarines by Indian Navy under transfer of technology. The minister said the light combat aircraft was planned for induction into the Indian Air Force from 2008 onwards.