

The Pioneer, 8 August 2006

'China, Pak not our only concern, Navy to be fully balanced in 10 yrs'

The Indian Navy's modernisation and upgradation programme is on track and within the next 10 years the service will be fully balanced, Naval chief Admiral Arun Prakash said. The Chief of Naval Staff said the stress is on developing indigenous capabilities. He also maintained the programme to acquire and build submarines in India is progressing well and "in a few years time we'd be back on the desired levels for naval air operations as well." "With a fantastic support by the indigenous ship building infrastructure and ongoing other acquisitions in next 10 years, the Indian Navy would be fully balanced, technologically modern fighting fit, all purpose maritime force to be reckoned with," he said. Highlighting these developments in an interview in the forthcoming issue of the Defence Ministry magazine, Sainik Samachar, he said, "The challenge for the Navy lies in protecting all the maritime interests of India and commensurate with India's economic trade and needs, energy security, threats and other geo-political necessities." Elaborating on this aspect, the naval chief said countries in the region look towards India for assistance and co-operation of all kinds whenever they are in need. He said, "We need to be always present for them for all those times. People of Indian origin are settled all over the globe, our maritime presence reassures them.

The Times of India, 19 August 2006

In a first, Indian woman serves on warship (Rajat Pandit)

New Delhi: The armed forces are still extremely reluctant to allow women officers to become fighter pilots or join the infantry or even serve aboard naval ships due to what they call "operational, practical and cultural problems". But now a Navy officer, Surgeon Commander Divya Gautam, has gone ahead and made history of sorts by becoming the first Indian woman officer ever to be deployed on board a foreign Navy ship. And by all accounts, she is doing a splendid job both as a doctor and a sailor. Gautam is part of a 10-member Indian Navy medical team serving aboard US Navy hospital ship Mercy, which is on a five-month humanitarian deployment in South Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific Islands. Reports emanating from the US ship, even as she traverses from port to port to provide medical relief, show that the American officers were quite surprised to find that India does not allow women aboard its warships. The Indian Navy had, in fact, tried the 'experiment' to allow women officers on sea-faring warships some years ago but it was discontinued soon after. Gautam, a general medical officer in Navy for the last 11 years, incidentally, was also part of that experiment. As reported earlier, defence minister Pranab Mukherjee has asked the three Service chiefs - Admiral Arun Prakash, General J J Singh and Air Chief Marshal S P Tyagi - to study the feasibility of granting women officers permanent commissions as well as inducting them in 'combat' arms like infantry, armoured corps and artillery. Women officers, of course, are keen on being inducted as regular officers.

The Times of India, 25 August 2006

Govt nod to Trenton warship deal with

New Delhi: In one of biggest defence deals with US since the 2002 contract for 12 AN/TPQ-37 firefinder weapon-locating radars, the government has approved purchase of the huge amphibious transport warship USS Trenton to bolster Navy's strategic sea-lift

capabilities. As reported earlier by TOI, Navy is also looking to procure six SH-3 Sea King helicopters to operate from the 173-metre long Trenton. With a 16,900-tonne displacement, Trenton will be the second largest warship in Navy's fleet, second only to the 28,000-tonne aircraft carrier INS Viraat, when it is inducted in mid-2007. "The government has approved the acquisition of Landing Platform Dock, USS Trenton, along with four landing craft mechanised and associated package, from the US at a cost of \$48.23 million (Rs 222 crore)," defence minister Pranab Mukherjee told Lok Sabha on Thursday. "The ship would provide the Navy with enhanced amphibious capability. In addition, it can be deployed for disaster relief operations. It can also function as a command and control platform during mishaps at sea like offshore oil installation fires and maritime air accidents," he added.