

The Navhind Times, 14 December 2004

Upgrading Naval Power (B K Mathur)

Plans after plans have been made for upgrading and modernising the naval force during the last three decades and more, prompting two significant questions. Has the Indian Navy become a superpower force? And, is the resource crunch affecting the force's long-term development programmes, keeping in view the fact that the gestation period in the sea force is quite long? The sea force has suffered all these years for lack of understanding of two realities. One, the growth of any naval force should be directly proportionate to the country's maritime interests. When it is said that India's is the eighth largest navy in the world, it is forgotten that the Indian peninsula has the fifth largest coastline in the world - 7,650 km and an area of over two million sq km Exclusive Economic Zone. Secondly, it is relevant for a naval force that in a full-fledged sea warfare, the area of operation and the position of the enemy is not exactly known. The area is not limited to any particular region. The operation could spread to thousands of kilometres throughout the length and breadth of the sea where a battle might take place. In the Indian Ocean and the seas around India, there are a number of powers operating with highly sophisticated machinery and lethal weapon systems. The entire sea area involved cannot be managed by a coast-based air force. More floating airfields (aircraft-carriers), rescue aircraft, nuclear-powered submarines and missile boats require top priority, given the present security environment.

The Times of India, 17 December 2004

Rookie naval pilot lands jet in sea

NEW DELHI: A rookie Indian naval pilot plunged a Sea Harrier jet into the sea Thursday after failing to bring it to a halt before it slipped off a coastal runway strip, a naval spokesman said. The pilot was safely rescued but the aircraft has been damaged. "There has been an accident involving a Sea Harrier aircraft. It involved a trainee pilot who, after landing, went off the runway of a shore base," Commander Vinay Garg, naval spokesman, told AFP. He said the British-made Sea Harrier aircraft, which can be flown from an aircraft carrier or land, cost about 23 million dollars each. More than 100 Indian air force pilots have died in the past decade in aircraft crashes usually involving Russian-built MiGs.

Daily News, 17 December 2004

First joint Indo-Sri Lanka naval exercise (Ranil Wijayapala)

Sri Lanka and India marked an important milestone in the Naval history of the two countries yesterday by completing the first ever joint operation code named Eksath by the Sri Lanka Navy and the Indian Coast Guard. The joint operation Eksath was conducted in the west coast of Sri Lanka off Colombo with the participation of ships, reconnaissance aircraft and helicopters of the Indian Coast Guard and the Off Patrol Vessels and Fast Attack Craft of the Sri Lanka Navy. According to the Sri Lanka Navy, this historic joint Naval exercise will be important to both countries for improving each other's Naval activities in the Indian Ocean. Sri Lanka Navy Off Patrol Vessels Sayura and Jayasagara and Indian Coast Guard OPVs Saranga and Durgabai Deshmuk along with four Fast Attack Craft participated in this joint Naval exercise. Indian Coast Guard helicopter Chatak and reconnaissance aircraft Dornier participated in this Naval exercise focused on rescue operations.

The Times of India, 18 December 2004

Indigenously manufactured tug inducted into Indian Navy

CHENNAI: A Rs 7.5 crore indigenously built harbour utility tug, 'Ajral', was inducted into the Indian Navy today at a formal ceremony at the Chennai port. The last of the five such tugs, the 'Ajral' has a state-of-the-art steering rudder propulsion system and diesel engines and has been constructed by Tebma Shipyard Ltd, a Defence press release said here. Measuring 28 metres in length, 'Ajral' is powered by two main engines. The Tug will be used at Visakhapatnam and would give a boost to the capability of the Naval Dockyard there, providing quick and optimal services to Naval warships, the release said.

The Hindu, 28 December 2004

Coast Guard, Navy on their toes (R.K. Radhakrishnan)

CHENNAI, DEC. 27. Coast Guard helicopters today brought ashore as many as seven bodies from the bay as search and rescue operations continued today. The helicopters were operated north of Chennai and from Pondicherry and beyond to look for survivors or bodies. "We did not find any survivors today. We have also moved a ship from Vizag with a helicopter to operate south of the Godavari for rescue operations," said U. Chitnavis, Eastern region commander of the Coast Guard. Commodore Chitnavis said that Point Calimere was still submerged and the Coast Guard were also operating in the vicinity. They were also searching for fishing boats that did not report back after venturing out yesterday.

The Indian Express, 30 December 2004

Navy's role in Lanka reflects shift in bilateral ties (C Raja Mohan)

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 29: That the Indian Navy could join the relief operations in Sri Lanka that bore the brunt of the tsunami strike is a reflection of the positive state of current relations between New Delhi and Colombo as well as the level of mutual confidence between the two naval forces.... The Navy at present has neither the resources nor the political direction to fulfill its natural role as a major provider of security, including humanitarian assistance, within the Indian Ocean littoral. Giving our Navy that new mandate and the necessary capabilities should be one of the important priorities for the Indian policy makers. The Ministry of Defence, the Navy and the Foreign Office need to put in place a package of defence diplomacy that makes regional disaster management a major national military and strategic objective.