

The Pioneer, 3 January 2006

Naval Ships find containers

Mumbai: Naval ships engaged in searching missing explosives from 'MV Eugenia' in the sea off Mumbai, have found two containers in the area where the ship crew had claimed to have dumped the consignment, official sources said on Monday. Efforts are on to lift the containers, the sources added.

The Asian Age, 3 January 2006

India to host biggest joint naval exercises (Pratap Chakravarty)

Port Blair, Jan. 2: India is ready to host its first major regional naval exercises since the tsunami disaster at the end of 2004, military officials said on Monday. "We want to show them our capabilities," Indian Navy Chief Admiral Arun Prakash said of the January 9-14 event, which will include ships from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Burma, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand. India will deploy two of its latest guided missile-carrying corvettes and other assault ships while Indonesia, Malaysia and Burma will send two warships each and the remaining four navies will field one, officials said. Australia also plans to send a delegation to the event, which will involve "limited wargames" off the Andaman and Nicobar island chain, said Lt. Gen. Aditya Singh, India's chief military commander of the archipelago. The event "will allow us closer military exchanges with Navies of these nations as well as lead to interaction across a wider canvas than just exercises," he said. It is the fifth such naval exercise in India's maritime zone since 1995.

The Pioneer, 4 January 2006

Indian, UAE navies to bridge the gulf

India and UAE are likely to hold joint naval exercises besides Indian Navy training the UAE Navy in various operational aspects in the coming months. The two navies are embarking upon this co-operation in the backdrop of close ties between the two countries and volume of business done mainly through the sea route. The commander of the UAE Naval forces Rear Admiral Suhail Mohammad Khalifa Al Marar, who was here on a four-day official trip starting Monday, held wide ranging discussions on these issues with Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Arun Prakash and his team here on Tuesday, an official spokesman said. Accompanied by a high level delegation, the visiting naval chief expressed keen interest in holding passage exercises with the Indian Navy as exports from India to the UAE rose by 40 per cent last year and most of the volume of business was done through the sea lanes, the spokesman said.

The Indian Express, 7 January 2006

Indian Navy commissions Asia's first unmanned craft squadron (Shiv Aroor)

New Delhi: The Navy's long-term vision for a coastline dotted with squadrons of unmanned spy planes kicked off today, with the commissioning of its first unit-INAS 342-in Kochi, thus becoming the first Navy in Asia to raise an exclusive squadron for unmanned aerial vehicles. Wasting no time since it first inducted UAVs four years ago, sources said that the Navy has already held discussions with DRDO on developing a maritime UAV with the capability to designate targets and deliver guided weapons. The Navy, especially Navy Chief Admiral Arun Prakash, was impressed with the US Navy's combat-drone command and control infrastructure in the Nevada desert, currently remotely piloting drones over Iraq. The squadron commissioned today is commanded by Commander Rajesh Kawatra. At present, the squadron's 12 Israeli-built Heron and Searcher MKII drones will be used for maritime surveillance and support for fleets over the Arabian Sea, but will be operationalised for deployment at the Navy's other airbases on the eastern seaboard as well. The drones have already been tested at the Navy's northernmost operational zones, including off the coast of Porbandar in Gujarat.

The Telegraph, 9 January 2006

Navy chief steps back from brink

New Delhi, Jan. 8: Navy Chief Admiral Arun Prakash had considered quitting after a relative of his was alleged to be involved in the leak of commercial information from the navy war room in defence headquarters. Admiral Prakash told a television channel today that he had since decided against it. Naval

intelligence had cleared him of possible involvement in the leakage of information on patrol boats and surveillance equipment that the navy was planning to buy. Three officers, including the Director of Naval Operations, were summarily dismissed from service last October after news of the leak broke. Defence minister Pranab Mukherjee said in Guwahati that the government was not doubting Admiral Prakash's integrity. "We have no doubt about his integrity. He is very competent," Mukherjee said.

The Indian Express, 11 January 2006

Centre approves Navy's Malacca plan (Shiv Aroor)

Port Blair, Jan 10: Finally asserting its claim to security along the Malacca Strait the Centre has approved the Navy's plans to approach Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia with a new multilateral plan that safeguards Indian interests along the stretch. Navy officers will make this operational proposal to senior delegates from the Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia navies here tomorrow as part of the Milan 2006 multinational exercises involving these countries and four others from the region. Deputy Chief Vice-Admiral J S Bedi is scheduled to arrive here over the next two days to give the Naval Headquarters' stamp of authority to the proposal. "So far we have only had bilateral cooperation. We are now looking at a multilateral platform of cooperation for the Malacca Strait. We are also present in the area and can provide support. In our discussions tomorrow, we will specifically discuss this as it is an important area that needs cooperation," the Naval component commander here, Commodore Arun Julka, said. The move comes after a four-year freeze by New Delhi on all matters concerning the Malacca Strait - the busiest sea lane of communication and trade in the world - after Naval warship INS Sharda was deployed to escort US freight carriers through in April 2002.

Hindustan Times, 11 January 2006

Indian Navy chasing buccaneers (Sutirtho Patranobis)

At Milan 06 - the biggest international naval exercise being organised by the Indian Navy off the Andaman coast - protecting Merchant Navy vessels plying through the 400 nautical mile strait will top the agenda. The Navy might also try to hammer out a multi-lateral pact with countries like Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia lining the strait. The exercise could further enable the Navy to navigate the choppy waters of maritime diplomacy in terms of its 'Look East' policy. The Navy has its hands full in the straits. The waters are infested with ills. Hijacking, human trafficking, smuggling, to name a few. India has conducted joint patrolling of the strait four times with Indonesia to clean up the waters. "The last one was on December 9 last year and the first was in 2002. We have also jointly patrolled the strait with Thailand. At Milan, we want to throw up more ideas for discussion with the participating nations," said Commodore Arun K. Julka, naval officer in-charge (Andaman and Nicobar). Milan has also scored another first. A ship from the Mynamar Navy will also take part in the exercise. The military junta is not exactly known for its forthcoming nature. "It is possibly for the first time in 40 years that a ship has been sent out by the Myanmarese junta to take part in a global exercise," Julka said.

The Asian Age, 12 January 2006

Navies discuss problems, new strategies (Ashwani Talwar)

Port Blair, Jan. 11: The venue of the seminar, a part of the meeting of regional navies, Milan 2006, being hosted here by the Indian Navy, was the Dweepa auditorium, which showed no trace of the damage it suffered in the 2004 earthquake that had triggered the tsunami. Appropriately enough, one session was devoted to disaster management by the navies. From Bangladesh, Commander Harun Ur Rashid discussed how his Navy dealt with thieves and robbers, criminals who dropped their knives, evidence that could land them in trouble into the sea when patrols approached. Commander J.S.K. Colombage talked of bigger worries, ships themselves being used as weapons. He elaborated by talking of terrorists carrying out a maritime version of the September 11 attack by blowing up a big ship of a commercial port. He also mentioned the suicide attack boats used by the LTTE against the Sri Lankan navy. "Those who bombed USS Cole, killing several American sailors, a few years back had learnt from LTTE tactics," he said. Protecting trade lanes remains a major theme of Milan 2006, with India sending

signals that it wants to play a meatier role in keeping the busy Strait of Malacca safe. The seminar was capped by the unveiling of an elaborate, imaginary scenario in Malacca. Officers discussed how regional navies could respond. On Thursday, the response will be played out in a tabletop exercise. The Indian Navy, which designed the exercise, hopes all this will evolve towards a "regional contingency plan."

The Asian Age, 18 January 2006

Russia gives Navy high-tech aircraft

New Delhi: After several months of refitting with new state-of-the-art sensors and weapons, Russia has returned an Ilyushin-38 aircraft to the Indian Navy, reports our special correspondent. The delivery of the refitted MRASW IL-38 begins a process of filling a gap in Indian Navy's maritime surveillance capabilities. MRASW stands for maritime reconnaissance anti-submarine warfare. The aircraft, delivered at the naval air station at Dabolim, Goa, last week, is the first of the three IL-38s which had been sent to Russia for the upgrade. When all three return, it would provide a big boost to maritime surveillance by the Navy. The aircraft is now fitted with the "Sea Dragon Mission Suite", which includes multi-function radar and the capability to track ships and submarines.

The Indian Express, 25 January 2006

Navy deal with Myanmar hits UK hurdle (Shiv Aroor)

New Delhi, January 24: The UK has been critical of India's recent overtures to Myanmar's military dispensation, but now it has warned New Delhi against the proposed sale by the Navy of a British-made BN-2 Islander aircraft to Yangon. Ahead of Navy Chief Admiral Arun Prakash's Myanmar visit from January 19-22, the British High Commission wrote a letter to the External Affairs Ministry, which was then forwarded to the Defence Ministry and the Navy. The Navy is now worried that the UK's protest could upset ongoing deals with that country, including the supply of helicopter spares and the cleared sale of 10 second-hand Royal Navy Sea Harriers to replenish the Goa-based fleet. The Navy finds this bizarre since there was no resale clause in the contract signed with British aviation firm Britten-Norman two decades ago. Yangon has expressed interests in using the aircraft for maritime surveillance and aerial ambulance missions. Snags in military business with London are new to the Navy. When its fleet of Sea King anti-submarine helicopters were sent to the UK for an upgrade in the mid 90s, they were virtually confiscated because of post-Pokhran US sanctions. Therefore, the new tension has compelled the Navy to go low key on the Navy's Chief's visit.

The Hindu, 31 January 2006

Britain warns India against selling aircraft to Myanmar

New Delhi: British High Commissioner Michael Arthur on Monday said India's sale of aircraft to Myanmar could impact its Navy's plan to replace fighters on the aircraft carrier INS Viraat and supply of spares for helicopters. "There are European Union guidelines on dealing with Myanmar. That can have some lock-on effect on our ability to supply spares to the rest of the fleet," he told newsmen at a seminar on Indo-U.K. defence industry here. The British High Commission has already written to the Indian Government, asking it not to go ahead with the offer made by Chief of the Naval Staff Arun Prakash to sell BN-2 Islander aircraft to Myanmar. Sources in the Defence Ministry point out that there was no resale clause in the contract signed with Britten-Norman when India bought the planes about two decades ago. Myanmar wants to use the aircraft for maritime surveillance and aerial ambulance missions. This is the second time in eight years the United Kingdom is putting a hurdle to the supply of badly needed helicopter spares.