

The Hindu, 8 July 2005

German firm keen on submarine bid; pressure to consider various offers (Sandeep Dikshit)

NEW DELHI: The Navy's quest to acquire submarines has taken a new turn with diplomatic pressure being mounted on the Government to consider offers from other countries. At present, the French company, Scorpene, is the only contender with the Navy contending that it had considered and rejected the German company HDW's submarines in 2002. However, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroder and his Economic Minister recently spoke to senior Central Ministers asking HDW to be given a chance after it was cleared of bribery allegations by the Delhi High Court, said reliable sources here. A HDW delegation has also arrived in the country but despite being cleared by the court it has still not been invited by the Navy for discussions. All that the team has managed is an audience with a senior Navy official where it gave a presentation on the recent corporate restructuring. With the Navy opposed to reconsidering offers from the German and Russian companies on grounds that the process would last for three years and further delay plans to replace its ageing submarines, the German company is prepared to consider offering a couple of second hand submarines to fill the gap till the new ones roll off the docks.

The Indian Express, 9 July 2005

Germans back in submarine fray (SHIV AROOR)

NEW DELHI, JULY 8: With the deal for French Scorpene submarines stuck at the Cabinet level, the Germans are in the country again, pitching hard for their HDW Class 214 submarines to be considered for what will be a Rs 12,000 crore order. With the French making a concerted attempt to convince the government to close the deal, the Germans are determined to get a foot in the door. Top officials representing the German shipbuilder HDW including a technical expert from the shipyard and management top-brass were here for the last few days. They made a comprehensive presentation to the Navy's controller of warship production & acquisition, Vice-Admiral JS Bedi, on Tuesday. The HDW officials have been regularly visiting India ever since the firm was cleared of corruption charges three months ago. The case involved their sale of four submarines to the Indian Navy in the mid-1980s.

The Tribune, 11 July 2005

Submarine deal: France offers to absorb inflation impact

Cherbourg (France), July 10: France today offered to absorb the increase in costs due to inflation in the multi-billion deal to make the Scorpene submarine in India. French defence major Armaris also assured expertise if the Indian Navy wanted to carry out "significant changes" in the design of the submarine to install an Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) system, called the Misma, and to add a new weapon system in the submarine, billed as the world's most silent killer machine. Terming as "misleading" that inflation could double the price of the submarine, Armaris Chairman Peter Legros said: "We are offering revisable and adjustable rates to level off cost escalation caused by delay in the finalisation of the deal." He also indicated that the company was open to making adjustments in the pricing of the deal, estimated to run into seven billion euros. Revealing that the inflation level in Europe was down to its lowest level, Legros told visiting Indian mediapersons here that the price escalation problem could be sorted out amicably. India and France completed negotiations for a deal to assemble six 2000-tonne displacement Scorpene submarines at Mumbai's Mazagoan docks under full technology transfer in early 2004.

The Hindu, 12 July 2005

Naval chief warns shipyards against slow pace of production (Sandeep Dikshit)

KOLKATA: Chief of the Naval Staff Arun Prakash on Monday criticised shipyards for the slow pace of production. The Navy needed five to six new ships or submarines annually but defence and civilian shipyards could at best deliver only two to three ships a year, he pointed out. This resulted in the Navy turning to imports. "This is not good enough and our shipyards must accelerate the pace of production. While we are deeply committed to our public sector undertakings, we cannot allow our force levels to decline. Therefore, if left with no alternative, we shall have no choice but to import warships to make up our force levels," he said at a ceremony to launch INS Beas, a frigate with the highest level of indigenisation, at the Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) here. "I have just sounded a note of caution. They have to step up the pace of production so that we do not have to go abroad for our requirements. Placing orders on our shipyards is high on our agenda. But maintaining the force levels is my top priority," he said.

The Hindu, 12 July 2005

"Navy prefers F-35s to F-18s"

KOLKATA: The Navy is interested in the F-35 fighter aircraft than the F-18, as our aircraft carrier [the first indigenous carrier being built at the Kochi shipyard] will not have the steam-catapult with which the F-18 takes off," according to Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Arun Prakash said here on Monday. "We are keen on the F-35 as

they are operated with the ski-jump facility and are more compatible," he said. He, however, does not know whether the issue had been taken up by Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee with the U.S. officials. The naval authorities had submitted a proposal to the Government for construction of the first indigenously-built submarine at the Mazagaon docks. "If the green signal is given, the submarine, with state-of-the-art facilities, will roll out of the Mazagaon dockyard within six years," he said.

The Times of India, 22 July 2005

Navy's N-sub project gathers steam (RAJAT PANDIT)

NEW DELHI: By the end of this decade, India should have a fully-operational nuclear submarine of its own. The Advanced Technology Vessel (ATV) project to build a nuclear-powered, guided-missile attack submarine is now on track after years of technical glitches and design problems. "The first functional ATV should be ready for trials by 2007-08. The technical problems, including fitting a miniaturised pressurised water reactor (PWR) and its containment vessel in the submarine's hull, have more or less been sorted out," say top sources. Sources say the two heavily guarded ATV project complexes at Visakhapatnam naval dockyard, where the basic submarine structure is being fabricated, and Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research at Kalpakkam, where the PWRs are being tested, are witnessing a flurry of activity these days. The project has been shrouded in secrecy ever since it was formally launched in 1983, with successive governments either denying its very existence or being deliberately vague about it.

The Tribune, 23 July 2005

Navy told to renegotiate Scorpene deal

New Delhi, July 22: Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Arun Prakash, today said the government had directed the Navy to renegotiate the \$2-billion Scorpene submarine deal with France with special focus on price escalation and transparency as per the new defence procurement guidelines of India. As part of the renegotiations, the focus would be on issues like warranty and integrity pact. He however, he ruled out entertaining any new offers from different manufacturers. The naval chief made this observation when asked if the German HDW submarine was also in the race. Speaking to reporters on the occasion of the second anniversary of the newsmagazine Force here, the naval chief, who outlined his vision for the Navy, however, clarified that the entire Scorpene deal would not be reopened. The navy had completed the mandatory price negotiations with the French for the acquisition of the Scorpene submarines a year back and sent the proposal for final approval by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS).

The Hindu, 25 July 2005

Splashing waves of goodwill (P. S. Suryanarayana)

SINGAPORE: The Indian Navy is splashing waves of goodwill along the shores of south-east Asia, as the modernised aircraft carrier, INS Viraat, makes its presence felt during its first-ever "deployment" in this region. Completing a highly successful four-day visit to Changi Naval Base in Singapore, INS Viraat, the only full-fledged aircraft carrier "in the true sense" owned by any Asian country as of now, reached Port Klang in Malaysia on Saturday. The "carrier task group" includes two destroyers (INS Rajput, INS Ranjit), one missile corvette (INS Khukri) and a tanker (INS Shakti). The fleet will later travel to Indonesia before resuming its other tasks as part of a one-month "deployment."

The Indian Express, 25 July 2005

Navy keen to enter S-E Asia arms market (SHIV AROOR)

NEW DELHI, JULY 24: The Navy is keen on securing early permission from the Centre for selling weapons and warships to "Indian Ocean countries", including Myanmar, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam. The Navy hopes the lower cost of buying from India will attract South-East Asian countries, which buy most of their defence hardware from US and EU countries. Navy chief Admiral Arun Prakash said, "A lot of our neighbours want weapons, sensors, patrol boats and ships which we make in India. We are working with the government to ensure that India becomes a supplier before someone else steps in." For starters, the chief has got the Defence Ministry's approval to upgrade the Navy's foreign cooperation cell to a full-fledged directorate, which will be the nodal agency for selling military hardware to the South-East. The Directorate is expected to be operational in a few weeks. The Ministry of External Affairs and the Defence Ministry are working out guidelines for selling weapons and ships to neighbours.