

The Hindu, 6 March 2005

India, Singapore hold 'maritime exercise' (P. S. Suryanarayana)

SINGAPORE, MARCH 5: India and Singapore have, for the first time in over a decade, held a 'maritime exercise' in the South China Sea. The 10-day exercise concluded on Thursday. All previous India-Singapore naval exercises, which began in 1994, were carried out off Kochi in the name and style of 'Lion King' series. The latest exercise, the first of a new series, is called the Singapore-India Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX-05). SIMBEX-05 was held in Singapore's 'naval environment' as part of a 'natural progression' of the city-state's naval exercises with India. The choice of the South China Sea as the theatre was 'not a signal to be given to somebody', Rear Admiral Sunil K. Damle, Flag Officer Commanding, Indian Navy Eastern Fleet, said in response to questions from The Hindu about the site of this exercise. The same was true for the exercises New Delhi was regularly holding with several countries in the Indian Ocean theatre or elsewhere, he emphasised.

The Indian Express, 6 March 2005

Pakistan, Iran to conduct joint naval exercises

Islamabad, March 6: Pakistan and Iran, which enjoy "long-standing brotherly" relations, will carry out joint naval exercises aimed at further strengthening ties between the navies of the two countries. "This, apart from a good opportunity for personnel of two navies to benefit from each other's experiences, also provides an arena to improve upon naval procedures and doctrines," a Pakistan navy statement here said. The Iranian naval ships Iris Bandar Abbas and Iris Larak will hold joint exercises with Pakistani navy, it said. Earlier, Iranian navy officials visited Pakistan and held meetings with high-ranking naval authorities and discussed matters of common interest, the statement said, adding Iranian officials visited various training and operational units of Pakistan navy and participated in different sports activities.

The Tribune, 7 March 2005

16 radars for 15 Sea Harriers (Girja Shankar Kaura)

New Delhi, March 6: There seems to be a problem of arithmetic in the Ministry of Defence (MoD) or is it that the ministry officials in a bid to ensure the judicious spending of the defence capital outlay, have chosen to turn a blind eye to the purchase of extra equipment than is required for the Sea Harrier aircraft with the Indian Navy stationed on the aircraft carrier INS Viraat. Sources here in the MoD said that the ministry had given its clearance for the purchase of a total of 16 Multimode Airborne Fire Control Radar systems from Israel for the Sea Harriers to improve their strike capabilities where as the Indian Navy actually has just 15 aircraft in its inventory. The multi-million dollar deal was recently inked between India and Israel's Elta-Israel Aircraft Industries Ltd (IAI). Israel's Rafael (Israel Armament Development Authority Ltd) had earlier won a 25 million dollar tender to provide 20 Derby missiles for the Indian Navy jets. Reports here suggested that the anomaly has apparently been brought to the notice of the MoD officials but a corrective action is yet to be taken.

The Daily Times, 8 March 2005

Navy should thwart supremacy designs in Indian Ocean: Aziz

KARACHI: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said on Monday that the government would do everything possible to enable Pakistan Navy to maintain and sustain the sanctity of Pakistan's coastline. Addressing the opening session of the PN Annual Exercise, Shamsheer-e- Bahar-II, the prime minister said that Pakistan must have an efficient, strong and viable navy to thwart any foreign designs for supremacy in the Indian Ocean. He expressed his pleasure that Pakistan Navy was alive to its duty. Aziz said Pakistan did not have aggressive design against anyone while being alive to defensive needs to protect it. "Pakistan has a long coastline and enormous maritime potential, which has been neglected for the past many years," he said, adding they were developing Gwadar Port as a major trans-shipment port that would provide outlet to the land-locked Central Asian Republics, Afghanistan and Western China for their trade.

The Nation, 9 March 2005

Maritime deterrence

MR Shaukat Aziz has rightly asserted that Pakistan would not allow the domination of the Indian Ocean by any country. He made the remark while being briefed about the Shamsheer-i-Bahr-II annual exercises at Karachi on Monday. Maritime hegemony by a state can jeopardise the freedom of sea-lanes and stifle the other littoral states' existing trade and prospects of its development, thus compromising their independent status. Pakistan sets great store by maritime trade to take full advantage of its potential to increase trade with the advent of WTO. It also provides the easiest route to the Central Asian States to conduct their trade through sea. With the completion of Gwadar port soon, Pakistan would be ready to accord them due facilities. Mr Aziz's reference to maintaining minimum deterrence is for this reason as well unquestionable.

The Daily Times, 9 March 2005

Indian subs being armed with Klub-S missiles

NEW DELHI: As part of measures to give force to its undersea fighting arm, the Indian Navy has started upgrading its Russian Kilo Class submarines and arming them with Klub-S cruise missiles, the Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency reported on Tuesday. "The missiles will give the submarines, inducted into the Navy between 1986 and 2002, strike capability to hit warships as well as surface targets from a standoff distance of up to 40 nautical miles from the ocean bed," PTI quoted high-ranking Naval officials as saying. The Navy, whose submarine fleet is floundering in the absence of clearance for reopening the sub building lines at Mazagoan docks, has already acquired ten of these huge diesel-electric patrol submarines from Russia with the latest one, INS Sindhusashtra, delivered late last year, the report said.

The Tribune, 11 March 2005

Navy arming submarines with cruise missiles

New Delhi, March 10: In an apparent effort to modernise its fleet and add another punch to its undersea fighting capability the Indian Navy is upgrading its Russian Kilo class submarines. As part of the effort it is arming the submarines with Klub-S cruise missiles which will give it the strike capability to hit warships as well as surface targets from a standoff distance of up to 40 nautical miles from the ocean bed. The submarines were inducted into the Navy between 1986 and 2002. The Navy has acquired 10 of these huge diesel-electric patrol submarines from Russia with the latest one, INS Sindhusashtra, delivered late last year. Under the deal negotiated with Russia's Zvezdochka Shipyard at Severodvinsk, eight of the Submarines are being retrofitted to enable them to carry the Russian 3M -54E1 Klub-s submarine-launched cruise missile (SLCM). While, three of the upgraded submarines have already been delivered back by the Russian shipyard, the other three are expected to be retrofitted in another two years. The remaining four are already equipped with the cruise missiles. According to Navy officials here the upgrading is being done at an estimated cost of Rs 352 crore. Officials said while initial trials had commenced for testing the missile from land based launchers, extensive work was going on to test the missile's undersea launch capability.

The Tribune, 12 March 2005

Patrol craft for Seychelles

To strengthen its visibility and position in the Indian Ocean, the government last month presented one of its latest patrol craft INS Tarmugli to Seychelles which, in turn, would provide the Indian Navy a strategic foothold in the region with a view to patrolling the country's shores and addressing its maritime concerns. As the Indian Navy has been asked to formulate a comprehensive policy for the Indian Ocean region which would help address security concerns, the handing over of the patrol craft would help in controlling the movement of unwanted elements along the high seas. As part of the plan, the Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Arun Prakash, presented INS Tarmugli to the authorities in Seychelles at Port Victoria on February 23. India's central location has made it a major stakeholder in the security and stability of the region. Maritime concerns range from apprehensions about illegal EEZ exploitation to terrorist attacks on maritime assets.

The Hindu, 13 March 2005

Navy places orders for BrahMos (T.S. Subramanian)

CHENNAI, MARCH 12: Production of BrahMos, the supersonic cruise missile developed by India and Russia, has begun in the country and the Indian Navy has placed orders for it, according to A. Sivathanu Pillai, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director, BrahMos Aerospace, New Delhi. He said the Navy had identified its vessels in which the BrahMos missiles would be fitted. About 20 industries in India and 10 from Russia were taking part in the production of various components for the missile (which would be assembled in India). A consortium between the two countries has been established to produce the missile system, he said. The production included fabrication of launchers, fire-control systems, accurate guidance systems and mobile platform called TATRA from which the missile could be launched. Many countries were interested in buying the missile. To whom to sell was under the consideration of the Government of India and the Russian Federation. Since BrahMos was the only supersonic cruise missile available in the world it had a strong market, he said.

The Indian Express, 14 March 2005

US deal hanging, cloud over Navy chief's trip (SHIV AROOR)

NEW DELHI, MARCH 13: Navy Chief Admiral Arun Prakash is set for a 11-day visit to Washington from March 18 though it's at a time when there is disquiet in the Pentagon over New Delhi's reluctance at taking up US's P-3C Orion maritime surveillance aircraft offer. Bitten by post-Pokhran sanctions, the Defence Ministry - that questioned the reliability of US defence contractors - wants the Pentagon to give it in writing that US manufacturers will not stop supplies under all circumstances just as the British did before the AJT Hawk deal was sealed. But the Pentagon is tied by US legislation that prohibits any written undertaking to a third country. The upshot - New Delhi has placed orders for two upgraded IL-38 maritime planes with Russia, ostensibly to replenish its fleet that lost two aircraft in an accident in 2003. Admiral Prakash said: "We already have IL-38s, so the ones we are getting are to replenish the fleet. The P-3C Orion proposal is from the US side and comprises a separate fleet... My US visit is a routine one. I will be visiting the Pentagon and will meet Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and possibly discuss the offers that Washington has made."

The Hindu, 21 March 2005

Aircraft carrier manufacture: India set to join elite club (Sandeep Dikshit)

NEW DELHI, MARCH 20: A month from now, India will take the first step towards joining the handful of countries that can manufacture aircraft carriers. "The date for steel cutting at Kochi has been fixed. This step marks the beginning of work on the aircraft carrier," said a senior naval officer. The Indian Navy has had two aircraft carriers: one has been decommissioned and the other is still in service, but barely. Another will join the Navy in 2008. All were bought second hand - the first two from the United Kingdom and the third from Russia.

The Daily Times, 23 March 2005

India and US set to sign major naval deal

NEW DELHI: India and the United States are set to sign a major defence deal for the sale of US spy planes and submarine rescue vehicles to the Indian navy, the Indian media reported on Tuesday. The two countries are close to signing an agreement under which the US will give India 10 retrofitted Lockheed Martin P3C Orions long-range naval maritime spy planes. "We are holding intense negotiations and are likely to sign a contract to get cover for Indian naval submarines and to buy submarine rescue vehicles for the Indian navy by the end of this year, Vice Chief of the Naval staff Vice Admiral Yashwant Prasad was quoted as saying. Admiral Arun Prakash is presently on a 10-day visit to the US and for talks with Pentagon officials on the purchase of P3C Orions and submarine rescue vehicles for the Indian navy, said the media report. On plans to

acquire P3C Orions, the vice chief of naval staff said: "We are looking at them seriously and they will be part of our talks."

The Times of India, 23 March 2005

Indigenous aircraft carrier on its way

NEW DELHI: The long wait for an indigenous aircraft carrier is now finally over. India's most ambitious ship-building project, a 37,500-metric ton Air Defence Ship (ADS) for the Navy, will get underway next month. "The steel cutting of ADS will take place at Cochin Shipyard on April 11. India will then join a very elite group of nations (US, UK, Russia and France) capable of designing and building an aircraft carrier," Navy vice-chief Vice-Admiral Yashwant Prasad said on Tuesday. But the Navy will have to wait till 2012 before the ADS is ready for induction into service. It will be capable of operating Russian MiG-29Ks, naval version of the indigenous LCA-Tejas, Sea Harriers, Advanced Light Helicopters and anti-submarine and maritime reconnaissance Kamov-31 helicopters.

The Daily Times, 23 March 2005

India will close submarine deal in 'days'

NEW DELHI: India is within "days" of closing a two billion dollar deal under which its navy will buy six French Scorpene submarines, a senior naval official said Tuesday. "It is about to get through," the vice-chief of naval staff Yashwant Prasad told reporters, of the deal aimed at plugging a hole in India's conventional military capability. "It should be through in the next coming days," he added. A source in the prime minister's office said the deal was on the agenda of the next security cabinet meeting next week. The deal has been on the table for several years. It provides for the sale of six Scorpene-class submarines and technology transfer that will allow the subs to be manufactured under licence in India. The "final approval" for the project, under which the Scorpene will be manufactured at Mazagaon Docks off the western city of Bombay, was discussed when French chief of defence staff General Henri Bentegeat visited here this month, a naval official said. Once the Scorpene deal gets the go-ahead, it will be at least six years before the first submarine is ready for induction, the official said.

The Indian Express, 23 March 2005

Year on, Navy turns down US Hawkeye deal (SHIV AROOR)

NEW DELHI, MARCH 22: After weighing the pros and cons for over a year, the Navy has decided to turn down the US offer of six E-2C Hawkeye 2000 carrier-borne early warning aircraft. It was a tough decision, a senior Naval officer admitted today, as the Navy has a crucial need for such a capability, but the reasons for turning down the Hawkeye were compelling - one being its bulky design. Instead, the Navy may look to DRDO for a carrier-based solution. DRDO is currently working with the IAF for a home-grown airborne early warning and control (AWACS) product. The Navy's Controller for Warship Production and Acquisition Vice Admiral J.S. Bedi told The Indian Express this afternoon, "First of all, the Hawkeye is too big. In light conditions, the endurance of the aircraft goes down from five to just one hour. And for an early warning aircraft to have the capability of staying for only one hour makes no sense. We have decided not to consider the Hawkeye."

The Times of India, 24 March 2005

HDW recurs, Navy fears modernisation delay (JOSY JOSEPH)

NEW DELHI: Emerging clean from almost two decades of corruption charges, the German submarine manufacturer HDW (Howaldtswerke-Deutsche Werft GmbH) has renewed its bid at bagging Indian Navy's proposal to buy submarines worth over \$4 billion. This could upset the force's strategy by delaying the crucial acquisition of the French Scorpene subs, for which negotiations have been completed, navy sources say. Cleared earlier this month by a city court of a 15-year-old corruption charges, which resulted in HDW losing out lucrative Indian defence contracts, the company is now on an all out effort to convince the government and bureaucrats that it is capable of supplying subs more modern and cheaper than the French Scorpene. Though the deal with Scorpene just needs the final approval of the Cabinet, sources in the navy say the entry of HDW could topple the entire deal and further complicate naval efforts to acquire a modern submarine fleet. Though slightly late in the day, the exoneration has given HDW a free hand to drop itself into the middle of the ongoing naval efforts to acquire a new submarine fleet for itself. The company's entry is so emphatic and with full energy that it is believed to be the reason behind the Cabinet Committee on Security putting off a final decision last week on acquiring French manufactured Scorpene submarines.

The Times of India, 24 March 2005

Naval chief in US to enhance ties

WASHINGTON: Indo-US naval cooperation and acquisition of US equipment and systems were on top of the agenda when Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Arun Prakash met top American defence officials here. Talks centred on ways to further strengthen military ties between the two countries, including joint exercises. All aspects of defence cooperation were discussed in the context of the transformed India-US relationship. During his stay in Washington, Admiral Arun Prakash met with US Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz, Under Secretary of Defence for Policy Douglas Feith, Secretary of Navy Gordon England and Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Myers, an Indian embassy press release said.

Indian Express, 24 March 2005

Work begins on first aircraft carrier in April

NEW DELHI, MARCH 23: India will join the select band of three countries that have the capability to manufacture heavy aircraft carriers when Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee launches construction of the 37,500-tonne displacement indigenous carrier in Kochi on April 11. The carrier, designed to operate a mix of Russian Mig-29K, naval version of the light combat aircraft, Sea Harriers, advanced light helicopters and anti-submarine and maritime reconnaissance Kamov-31 helicopters, is expected to be delivered by the Cochin Shipyard by early 2012, Vice-Admiral Yashwant Prasad, Vice-Chief of the Naval Staff, said here. "With this, India will join an elite group of countries with the capability." So far, only France, the United States and

the United Kingdom have the capability.

The Hindu, 28 March 2005

Navy facing shortage of civilian staff

MUMBAI, MARCH 27: The Navy is facing a shortage of civilian manpower and finds it difficult to run its establishments, particularly the workshops for maintenance of warships and equipment. Poised to commission its new base at Karwar, which is considered one of the most modern naval bases in the world, the Navy has told the Government that it would not be able to operate the facility for want of adequate civilian staff, according to the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Western Command, Vice Admiral Madanjit Singh. Admiral Singh was talking to reporters on board the aircraft carrier, INS Viraat, today after a demonstration exercise of the Western Fleet. He said there was a 31 per cent shortage of civilian manpower. The Karwar naval base was scheduled for commissioning in May next and immediate sanction of manpower was needed. The Navy had plans to hold the National Fleet Review in February next year. The President would preside over the event. Besides the warships of the Navy and Coast Guard vessels, merchant ships, oil exploration platforms, fishing vessels of the Indian companies and research vessels participate in the programme.