

The Tribune, 3 May 2005

Naval top officers meet today (Girja Shankar Kaura)

New Delhi, May 2: Looking at becoming a major maritime force, specially in the Indian Ocean region the Naval top brass begin tomorrow a three-day think-session in Mumbai to chart the course for the future. A Navy spokesman said here that due to extra-regional forces increasing their presence in the Indian Ocean - both in terms of numbers and capability - the maritime security environment was becoming "more complex, more fluid and significantly more challenging. As a result there was need to make the Navy more operationally focused force and capable of dealing with the changing environment of the 21st century. All these issues were expected to be the key topics for discussion at the Naval Commanders' Conference being hosted by the Western Naval Command. The conference is being attended by the brass from the Integrated Headquarters at New Delhi, the Command Headquarters and Fleet Commanders.

The Indian Express, 3 May 2005

Navy eyes new Boeing, awaits US signal (SHIV AROOR)

NEW DELHI, MAY 2: Even as Washington's offer of a P-3C Orion maritime surveillance aircraft hangs fire, the Navy has expressed interest in Boeing-737 P-8A multi-mission maritime aircraft - the jet that Boeing is developing to replace the ageing P-3C Orion platform. Top Naval officials told Express that the Navy's interest has already been communicated and the Pentagon would possibly provide an answer through Defence Security Cooperation Group (DSCG) chief Lt Gen Jeffrey B. Kohler. The P-8A is the only military product India has expressed interest in, which even the US doesn't possess yet - it will be fully operational and delivered to the US Navy only by 2013. In fact, the P-8A was cleared by a US technical review board to proceed into the design phase just five days ago. Almost all other defence products Washington has so far offered to New Delhi will either shortly be phased out or face possible budgetary cuts. For example, the F-16 Falcon which is now competing for a 126 aircraft order from the IAF, will slowly be phased out when the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter becomes operational by 2008. The US has offered India the Patriot-2 anti-missile defence system but itself uses the newer generation Patriot-3. The P-8A matches the operational profile jointly mandated to the Indian Navy's Tupolev-142 long-range reconnaissance planes and Ilyushin-38 maritime patrol and anti-submarine warfare aircraft. Washington's offer for at least 12 P-3C Orions would match the same profile, though the P-8A will have superior intelligence gathering equipment and ASW capabilities.

The Daily Times, 12 May 2005

Indian Navy Sea Bird will be operational soon (Iftikhar Gilani)

NEW DELHI: The long-pending Sea Bird Project of the Indian Navy will become operational later this month, Indian Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee announced in the Rajya Sabha (Upper House) on Wednesday. He also said that the ongoing construction of an Air Defence Ship (ADS) at the Cochin Shipyard in Kochi (Kerala) has put India among few countries in the world who have the capacity to manufacture an aircraft carrier. The operationalisation of Sea Bird project begins with the commissioning of Depot Ship, INS Kadamba. Mukherjee, however, made it clear that the headquarters of the Western Naval Command will continue to remain in Mumbai. "The Naval base at Karwar in Karnataka would provide berthing, administrative, maintenance and support services to warships of the Navy, which would be equipped with modern weapons," the Minister added. Mukherjee further said that the indigenous construction of the aircraft carrier at a cost of Rs 28.80 billion was approved in January 2003 and it is likely to be ready by 2011-12. The aircraft carrier will have the capacity to carry the weight load of approximately 37,500 metric tonnes.

The Hindu, 22 May 2005

Karwar naval project takes off from May 31 (Ravi Sharma)

BANGALORE: Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee will inaugurate the first phase of Project Seabird, India's long awaited, futuristic, state-of-the-art operational naval base on the western seaboard at Karwar (Karnataka) on May 31. To be commissioned as Indian Naval Ship (INS) Kadamba (after the famous fourth century dynasty), the base, after the unfurling of the Naval ensign and the traditional "breaking of the commissioning pennant," will become India's third operational one after Mumbai and Visakhapatnam. To be equipped with a naval air station, naval armament depot, research facility and a full-fledged naval ship repair yard, Kadamba is expected to cost Rs. 35,000 crores, and in time become the biggest naval base this side of the Suez Canal. Also taking part in the commissioning will be six frontline Indian naval ships, including frigates and destroyers. They will be detached from the flotilla of 12 vessels that are presently taking part in routine exercises in the Arabian Sea. The ships will sail into the base's ample anchorage and then be berthed for the duration of the ceremony alongside the newly built 420 by 185m jetty. For the Navy the commissioning celebrations will be unique for several reasons. It will be one of the rare occasions of the commissioning of a shore establishment; it will also be the first naval shore establishment in Karnataka (all the other southern States except Pondicherry have naval shore establishments); and could also be the last shore establishment that the Navy will be commissioning.

The Daily Times, 27 May 2005

Pak-US navies have joint parade

KARACHI: Upon arrival in the US, Pakistan Navy ships, Tippu Sultan and Moawin, took part in joint parade with the US Aircraft Carrier JFK, guided missile destroyer, frigates and various other vessels. Pakistan Navy ships are on the first ever 'West Bond Transatlantic' deployment. Vice Admiral Farooq Rashid, the chief of staff, would lay wreaths on behalf of the chief of the Naval Staff at the US Memorial Day celebrations. Meanwhile, Mission Commander Commodore Asif Sandila hosted various functions on board Tippu Sultan.

The Tribune, 28 May 2005

Naval chief asks for speedy delivery of ships (Shiv Kumar)

Mumbai, May 27: Admiral Arun Prakash, Chief of Naval Staff, today asked defense ship builders like Mazgaon Docks Ltd (MDL) to speed up their delivery process so that the Indian Navy's requirements were met on time. Addressing senior naval officers and officers of MDL on the occasion of the launch of Sahyadri, the P-17 Shivalik-class stealth frigate, Admiral Prakash said the Navy required six to seven ships to be inducted per year though only two to three ships were made available to it at present. The Navy is in a hurry to modernise its ageing fleet and efforts are on to acquire ships of different classes. Admiral Prakash said more orders would be coming from the Navy during the 10th five-year plan to keep the production facilities of organizations like MDL to keep going at full capacity. The Admiral, however, felt that the defense contractors could speed up their delivery schedules. The Sahyadri, which was launched today, was only about 23 per cent complete. "Our ships need at least 35 to 40 per cent completion before launch," Admiral Prakash said.

The Hindu, 31 May 2005

New moves in the Malacca Straits (P.S. Suryanarayana)

IT IS almost a year since the United States, self-appointed "guarantor" of peace and stability across the Asia Pacific region since the end of the Second World War, proposed the Regional Maritime Security Initiative (RMSI) for the protection of global shipping from potential terrorist attacks along the busy Straits of Malacca. While the RMSI has not taken off owing to reasons of political opposition from two key states along the Straits, some new ideas have been floated by countries bordering this vital lifeline of global trade in oil and energy supplies. A significant proposal came up during the International Maritime Defence Exhibition [IMDEX Asia-2005] held in Singapore in mid-May. Singapore Defence Minister Teo Chee Hean suggested that the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF) "could consider moving beyond discussions on maritime security to work towards a maritime security exercise in the near future." For the first time, an anti-terror "maritime security exercise" was held as an event directly related to IMDEX. India, Australia and Japan, besides Singapore, were among the regional powers that participated in the naval exercise, deploying some of their state-of-the-art warships that had come for the main exhibition.

The Times of India, 31 May 2005

Naval base to be commissioned on West coast

BANGALORE: After protracted delays and cost overruns, the first phase of a sprawling Rs 350 billion Indian Navy base on the western coast is to be commissioned on Tuesday by Sonia Gandhi, chairperson of the ruling United Progressive Alliance. Initiated as Project Seabird some two decades ago, INS Kadamba, near Karwar in north Karnataka, is the first exclusive naval harbour on the western coast. It is located 580 nautical miles from Mumbai, currently the navy's principal base and home to its largest formation, the Western Fleet. Six frontline naval ships, including frigates and destroyers will sail into the base's anchorage Tuesday and berth at the newly built jetty to mark the inaugural event. The navy initially plans to berth 10 ships, including destroyers, frigates, corvettes, auxiliary ships and offshore patrol vessels at the base. INS Kadamba, named after a fourth century dynasty that ruled the area, is spread over 4,480 hectares. It was identified as the ideal site for a strategic naval base thanks to the natural protection the topography provides and because of its bays and offshore islands. When fully operational, the base will be the biggest naval facility to the east of the Suez. It will comprise a naval air station, a naval armament depot and a ship repair yard. This yard will include a Rs.1.5-billion ship lift system to carry out repairs on multiple warships unlike conventional dry docks that can accommodate only a single ship at a time.