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Navy confident of commissioning aircraft carrier Vikrant in two years

Hold-ups in procuring major parts resolved



Force multiplier
India's first indigenous aircraft carrier, IAC-I Vikrant, is in its final stages of construction

- IAC-I Vikrant is named after India's first aircraft INS Vikrant, which was decommissioned in 1997
- IAC-I is being built by Cochin Shipyard
- It is powered by 4 GE gas turbines

Green light: Project approved by the Cabinet Committee on Security in 2003 and the keel for the 260 metre long ship was laid in 2009

Project estimate: The CCS had initially sanctioned ₹3,200 crore which was subsequently revised to ₹19,341 crore. The cost is expected to go up further

Timeline: It is expected to be handed over to the Navy by 2018-end after which it would be out through harbour and sea trials followed by aviation trials

Fleet entry: The Navy is confident of commissioning the carrier by Oct. 2020

The launchpad: Vikrant has a ski-jump for launching aircraft and employs the STOBAR (Short Take-Off But Arrested Recovery) mechanism with arrestor cables to recover the aircraft

Weight:
40,000 tonnes, with 20 Mig-29K fighter jets and 2 Kamov helicopters

After several delays, the Indian Navy is confident of commissioning Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC-1) *Vikrant*, currently under construction at Kochi, by October 2020, a senior officer said on Friday.

“IAC-I is expected to join the Navy in October 2020. All trial schedules have been worked out. We are going to sign advanced contracts with Cochin Shipyard Limited very soon,” said Commodore J. Chowdhary, principal director of naval design. He was speaking at a media briefing on the Navy’s Republic Day contingents. The theme of this year’s Navy tableau is centred around a model of *Vikrant* being built at the shipyard.

The IAC-I project has been delayed due to hold-ups in procurement especially of 18 major equipment related to aviation complex, including the arrestor and the withstanding gear, from Russia, Cdre. Chowdhary said. “There were licencing issues which have been resolved.”

Sea trials

The carrier is likely to be handed over to the Navy by December 2018 after which it will be put through harbour and sea trials before commissioning.

Vikrant borrows its name from India’s first aircraft carrier, the 20,000-tonne INS *Vikrant* purchased from the U.K. India currently operates the 44,500-tonne INS *Vikramaditya* procured from Russia.

Like INS *Vikramaditya*, *Vikrant* too would employ the STOBAR (Short Take-Off But Arrested Recovery) mechanism with a ski-jump and arrestor cables to launch and recover aircraft.

It can operate 20 fighter jets and 10 other aircraft. The Mig-29K fighters currently in service with the Navy would also be on the deck of *Vikrant*.

Initially the plan was to have a mix of Mig-29K and the naval variant of the indigenous Light Combat Aircraft, Tejas.

The IAC-I project was approved by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) in 2003 and the keel for the 260-metre ship was laid in 2009. The CCS had initially sanctioned ₹3,200 crore, which was subsequently revised to ₹19,341 crore.

In a 2016 report, the Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG) said that the “delivery of the carrier with completion of all activities is likely to be achieved only by 2023.” But Navy officials stated that all issues have now been resolved and the ship would join the Navy in 2020.

The Navy has already set sights on the IAC-II, which it envisages to be conventionally powered and displace 65,000 tonnes with an advanced Catapult-based Aircraft Launch Mechanism (CATOBAR) similar to the U.S. Electro-Magnetic Aircraft Launch System (EMALS) for aircraft launch and recovery.



Sat, 20 Jan, 2018

A Step Closer To NSG, India Joins Australian Group

In an important step towards its membership for the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), India on Friday joined the elite Australian Group (AG), which seeks prevention of proliferation of chemical and biological weapons (CBW) through exports.

India's membership request was taken through a consensus decision.

With entry into the AG, India is now member of the three out of the four multilateral groupings on proliferation prevention and arms exports control and awaits the membership of the fourth export control regime, the NSG.

India joined the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) in 2016 and the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies in 2018.

Though the membership in these three groupings strengthens the prospects for India's membership in the NSG, New Delhi still has to overcome the Beijing roadblock which is insisting on signing of a Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, insisting that to be important criteria for the NSG membership.

Kenneth Juster, the United States Ambassador to India, recently said America is working with its partner countries for India's membership in the NSG.

“On January 19, 2018, India formally became the 43rd member of the Australia Group (AG), the cooperative and voluntary group of countries working to counter the spread of materials, equipment and technologies that could contribute to the development or acquisition of chemical and biological weapons (CBW) by States or terrorist groups,” the AG said in a release.

Reacting to India's entry to the group, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Ravish Kumar said it would be mutually beneficial and to help in non proliferation. He said the AG membership will help in establishing India's credentials further.

“India joined the AG on January 19, 2018, following the completion of internal procedures for joining the Group. The Australia Group decided to admit India as the Group's 43rd Participant through a consensus decision. India would like to thank each of the AG participants for their support for India's membership. We would also like to thank Ambassador Jane Hardy of Australia, former Chair of the Australia Group, for her role in facilitating India's accession to the Group. India's entry into the Group would be mutually beneficial and further contribute to international security and non-proliferation objectives,” Ravish said.

India has also said its law-based export control system enables the Government to implement the obligations arising from the Australia Group's Guidelines and Common Control Lists, including its reporting requirements, information exchange and principles.

The AG said there is very strong support expressed for India's membership at the 26-30 June 2018 Australia Group Plenary, after which consensus was reached inter-sessionally. India then reaffirmed its intention to join the Group.

"In warmly welcoming India to the Group, the other AG members recognised the Government of India's commitment to bring India's export control system into alignment with the AG and India's determination to contribute to the global effort to prevent the proliferation of CBW in the security interests of all members of the international community," the release said.

It added that with its admission into the AG, India has demonstrated the will to implement rigorous controls of high standards in international trade, and its capacity to adapt its national regulatory system to meet the necessities of its expanding economy.

"India is also aware of the need to constantly adapt its export controls in the face of rapidly evolving scientific and technological challenges, and in this regard, affirmed its readiness to act in close cooperation with all members towards the furtherance of AG objectives," it further said.

The other members of the AG are: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Republic of Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom and United States.



Sat, 20 Jan, 2018

NSG boost: Key arms club welcomes India

By Jayanth Jacob

India on Friday became the 43rd member of the Australia Group (AG), a key export control regime, bolstering the country's efforts to join the elite Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) that controls trade in fissile materials and technologies.

The AG is a group of countries working to counter the spread of equipment, materials and technologies that could contribute to the development or acquisition of chemical and biological weapons by states or terrorist groups.

India's entry into the third major export control regime after the Wassenaar Arrangement and the Missile Technology Control

Regime (MTCR) will strengthen supply chain security in biotechnology and chemical industries.

"There was very strong support expressed for India's membership at the 26-30 June, 2018 Australia Group Plenary, after which consensus was reached inter-sessionally. India then reaffirmed its intention to join the Group," the grouping said.

The external affairs ministry said in a statement: "India's entry into the Group would be mutually beneficial and further contribute to international security and non-proliferation objectives."

The number of countries in the AG has grown from 15 in 1985 to 41 plus the European Union. China is not a member of this grouping.

India's efforts to join the NSG have been consistently blocked by China despite support from the US and other key Western powers. The NSG works on the principle of consensus and even one country saying no can spoil India's chances of getting entry.

The members of the AG recognised India's commitment to align export control systems with the group's policies.

It also recognised New Delhi's determination "to contribute to the global effort to prevent the proliferation of CBW in the security interests of all members of the international community".

New Delhi maintained its "law-based export control system enables the Government of India to implement the obligations arising from the Australia Group's Guidelines and Common Control Lists including its reporting requirements, information exchange and principles", the grouping said in its statement.

This will help reinforce to the world community the larger acceptance India is getting for its non-proliferation credentials. India is not a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and maintains the pact is discriminatory.

The commitments that India made to the AG and other export control regimes, such as its willingness to implement rigorous controls in international trade of sensitive materials and technology, its capacity to adapt its national regulatory system to meet the necessities of its expanding economy and its willingness to align its export controls in the face of rapidly evolving scientific and technological challenges, is set to help its cause as it seeks to become a member of the NSG.

Business Standard

Sat, 20 Jan, 2018

The Kalam- Collegiums Papers

As we watch The Postand re-learn The Pentagon Papers' history, the story of how two argumentative rivals 'conspired' to ensure an important story wasn't killed

By Shekhar Gupta

Besides politics, this is a week marked by talk of The Post, the film about how The Washington Post and its great Editor-Publisher (as Americans call the newspaper proprietor) duo of Benjamin Bradlee and Katharine Graham made history, and set new standards in courageous journalism. The story has been told many times before, in books (both Graham and Bradlee have written stellar autobiographies, and then, indeed, All The President's Men). You can never have enough of hearing, reading and seeing it. Watergate and the Pentagon Papers remain the gold standard globally for journalistic courage. Generations of journalists have drawn inspiration from them.

Since enough time has passed, I can now talk in some detail about how the Pentagon Papers became an inspiration for something unusual we did at The Indian Express in the winter of 2006. Or, even at the risk of giving some suspense away, what was done between The Indian Express and The Hindu, together. The two papers were not direct rivals in either's important markets but competed furiously in the realm of ideas and philosophies, particularly economic and strategic policies.

Comparisons with The Post-NYT situation would be pompous, so we won't go there. We'd just limit ourselves to saying that the philosophical, ideological and therefore editorial worldview of the two papers was quite contrary, unlike The Postand NYT, both rooted in the same American liberal space. The Hindu, under N Ram's editorship, was inclined to the Left on economic and strategic issues, and we to the Right. Both were socially liberal.

In today's over-simplified if not idiot-proofed discourse, you'd call The Hinduthen Left-liberal and us, at the Express, in search of a non-hyphenated liberal utopia: Liberal on society, liberal on the economy. But very impatient to break out of old Cold War foreign and strategic policies and burdens.

It is important to understand these facts underlying the drama that is about to unfold. In fact, it only makes it more dramatic — and I'd say for Mr Ram and The Hindu, enormously more creditable. Let me also give some more suspense away: This story also involved one institution making so much news this week, the Supreme Court Collegium.

In the weeks leading up to November 2006, Ritu Sarin, who owns the chief investigative reporter's hallowed spot not just in The Indian Express but the entire Indian media, broke two brief stories on our page one. These were about President APJ Abdul Kalam objecting to the elevation of Delhi High Court's Justice Vijender Jain as Chief Justice of the Punjab and Haryana High Court because of some collegium members' reservations. Each time, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh asked him to consult Chief Justice of India Y KS abharwal, who insisted that the appointment should go through.

Kalam was persistent. He returned the file for the third time. This time he did something no president had as yet done — and I am not sure if any president has done subsequently. He wrote, in two succinct paragraphs (<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/t p-national/President-Kalam-file-noting-on-Vijender-Jain-appointment/article15741494.ece>) his reservations. He said, in the consultative process, three senior judges had raised doubts on the appointment. Further, that to still push it through, the size of the collegium had been increased by a judge, which was against the procedure. Quite inevitably, Ritu landed in the newsroom, "scoop" painted all over her face, with a copy of Kalam's note.

There was the usual buzz as we got down to processing it, and questions were asked from the relevant high offices. We were all set to publish and then catastrophe struck.

This, Delhi-walas would recall, was the year of largescale demolitions and sealing of illegal, irregular or unlicensed constructions all over Delhi by an empowered high court committee set up by the Bench headed by Justice Jain. Our offices were located in two buildings on the southern edge of the city in what is called Qutub Institutional Area. These lands had been allotted cheap to charities and trusts for institutional purposes but many had been sold, over-built or had rented more than they were permitted to. The committee's enforcers arrived that November 18 afternoon, sealed seven buildings where ownership had been changed, and added the two where we were located. We were suddenly homeless.

Worse, however, was the realisation that we could no longer publish the story with Kalam's note. How could a paper ever publish a story "against" the judge whose orders had just locked it out of its newsrooms? We consulted every top lawyer in the country. They all figured the issue, but had the same advice: You can't publish. It will be seen as vengeful and be a possible case of contempt. So here we were, working literally from the pavement and our homes, with that never-before wrench: Having a story we couldn't publish.

I keep a closet filled with the copies of the paperback edition of Benjamin Bradlee's *A Good Life* to use as a gift for fellow — especially younger — journalists. Flipping through a copy absent-mindedly I stopped at the mention of the Pentagon Papers. My colleagues and I thought we had found a way out. Not to get back to our old newsrooms, but to get that story out.

I called Mr Ram in Chennai and, after pleasantries, asked if he remembered what happened when a judge enjoined The New York Times from publishing Neil Sheehan's scoops on The Pentagon Papers? Of course, he said, the papers were then given to The Washington Post, which started publishing because it hadn't been enjoined. I said we had a similar situation. We readily became complicit in ensuring this story would not remain unpublished. Never mind our arguments.

Ram said he and I might conclude this at Mani Shankar Aiyar's daughter Yamini's wedding luncheon reception in Delhi, for which he was coming. We met on the lawns of Aiyar's bungalow. I pulled out a rolled printout from my jacket and handed it to him. In the cutthroat world of journalism, this was like high treason. But letting a story be killed because you can't publish it is a bigger crime than passing it to the competition.

The story was the front-page flier in next morning's The Hindu (<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/Acontroversial-judicial-appointment/article15728178.ece>). Its reporter had added much value to it, also by talking to a key collegium judge quoted anonymously in the story. The CJI still insisted on going through with Justice Jain's appointment as chief justice of the Punjab and Haryana High Court. But that was between him and Kalam. It was never our objective to block the appointment. Nor do we know if that story in The Hindu had any impact on the choices the collegium made for the Supreme Court subsequently.

We were only obsessed with a most important and factual story that had "Must Publish" written on it. That it was published is a tribute to the largeheartedness of The Hindu and Mr Ram. The inspiration — if not instigation — had come from The Pentagon Papers.

Reporter's luck: Dainik Jagran was the first Indian media group to bring FDI. Its first investor was the company owning the Irish Independent. In early 2007, it threw a party in Delhi to introduce the board of its investors. I found two familiar faces. The first looked just like, and was, Sean Connery. He was on the board of the Irish Independent. I walked up to the second, a very distinguished-looking old man, and told him he looked just like Benjamin Bradlee. "I am Bradlee, young man," he said. He was also a board member. I told him the Express-Hindu story and how it had been inspired by his exploits and got him to agree to an interview on NDTV's 'Walk the Talk' the next morning. It is a conversation to cherish (<https://www.ndtv.com/video/shows/walk-the-talk/walk-the-talk-with-benjamin-bradlee-aired-april2007-342429>) even if so non-TRP friendly.



Sat, 20 Jan, 2018

Asteroid larger than Burj Khalifa to skim Earth in Feb

An asteroid that's larger than the tallest building on Earth is set to skim past the planet in two weeks, according to recent findings by space experts. The space rock has been dubbed 2002 AJ129 and it's bigger than the Burj Khalifa, which is 830 metres high. Set to pass Earth on February 4, the asteroid will miss our planet by 4.2 million kilometres. That's still close enough to classify it as a "near-Earth object" and "potentially hazardous" by Nasa. If the 1.1km-wide asteroid was to strike us, it would likely send up enough soil and dust to blanket the planet and plunge Earth into darkness.



Sat, 20 Jan, 2018

New blood test detects 8 types of cancer

Scientists at Johns Hopkins University in the US have taken the first step towards a universal blood test for cancer by conducting trials of a non-invasive test that detects eight common types of the disease long before any symptoms arise.

The test called Cancerseek, first reported in Science journal, detected cancers of the ovary, liver, stomach, pancreas, oesophagus, colorectum, lung and breast when it was applied to 1,005 patients already been diagnosed with the disease.

"Cancerseek tests were positive in a median of 70% of the eight cancer types. The sensitivities ranged from 69% to 98% for the detection of five cancer types (ovary, liver, stomach, pancreas, and esophagus) for which there are no screening tests available for average-risk individuals," Science reported. The test was also able to localise the cancer to a small number of anatomic sites in 83% of the patients, the report said.

Scientists are excited about the first non-invasive blood test that can simultaneously screen for a range of cancers but the researchers believe further studies are needed before Cancerseek can be made widely available for its projected cost of less than \$500. Cristian Tomasetti from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine told the BBC: “This field of early detection is critical. I think this can have an enormous impact on cancer mortality.”

Finding tumours so that they could be surgically removed would be “a night and day difference” for survival, said Tomasetti.

Cancerseek is now being tried on people who have not yet been diagnosed with cancer, which will be the real test of its usefulness. Researchers are hoping it can complement screening tools such as mammograms for breast cancer and colonoscopies for colorectal cancer. Standard biopsy: Needle used to remove tissue or sample of cells to be analysed in laboratory

Blood test: Identifies two signals that show person might have cancer Genetic mutations

Proteins

Result: In blood samples from 1,005 patients with eight types of tumours, test detected between 33% and 98% of cases.