

2006 : THE YEAR THAT WAS

Transformation

- If one had to describe the one defining movement of the year 2006 for the Indian Navy, it would be the shaping of the future course of the Indian Navy in response to the ‘winds of change’ that have come to characterise the Twenty-first Century. How best to manage ‘change’, was an issue that occupied the collective and individual minds of naval officers throughout the Service. It was, as a consequence, a tumultuous year, marked by honest and sometimes brutal introspection into the very nature of the Navy, the altered security environment in which it must function, the changes wrought by the global technological revolution, and, the acceptance of ‘transformation’ as a process rather than as an end-state. This was not, by any means, merely a sterile, intellectual exercise, but, instead, led to the adoption of a series of bold, brave — and often daring — transformational steps, designed to give practical form to the Navy’s decision to voluntarily manage change rather than have change simply thrust upon it.
- The result has been a well-articulated commitment to ‘transformation’ on a navy-wide basis, with the process being guided along a carefully drawn road-map, heralding a future that promises to be both, exciting and fulfilling in every way.
- Having taken the decision to ‘transform’, the Navy quickly settled down to the task of producing a series of **classified** capstone-documents, intended to chart its course through the untested waters of the future and afford guidance to the naval community as a whole. These documents supplement and build-upon the already published “Maritime Doctrine”, and include the “Future Indian Navy — Strategic Guidance for Transformation”, and, “Freedom of the Seas — India’s Maritime Strategy”.

Operations

President's Fleet Review

- The port city of Visakhapatnam in the state of Andhra Pradesh awoke on the 11th of February 2006, to the first of a three-day spectacular, organised by the Indian Navy. On the 11th, hundreds of thousands of Indians thronged the beaches of Visakhapatnam for a close-up and personal view of their Navy, as it presented them with an awesome 'Operational Prowess Demonstration', incorporating the firing of rockets and missiles, a submarine demonstration, and, the launch and recovery of Sea Harrier aircraft from INS *Viraat*. The next day, the 12th of February brought what would be perhaps the most significant and event of the naval calendar for the year 2006, namely, the 9th President's Fleet Review (PFR). This was, for the first time ever, conducted on the country's eastern seaboard. As many as fifty-eight warships and forty-eight naval aircraft of the Indian Navy, supplemented by four ships and eight aircraft of the Indian Coast Guard, as well as by one representative ship of the Indian merchant marine, were reviewed by the President of India, His Excellency, Shri APJ Abdul Kalam, in his capacity as the Supreme Commander of the Indian Armed Forces. The President also created history on the following day, when he honoured the Indian Navy by awarding his Colour to the Eastern Fleet and then, with characteristic aplomb, embarked the submarine INS *Sindhurakshak* for a dived sortie of several hours, thereby fixing the 13th of February firmly in the collective mind of the nation and its navy, as a red letter day, indeed.

PM's Day at Sea

On the 5th of May, Shri Manmohan Singh, the Honourable Prime Minister of India, spent an evening at sea with the Western Fleet. He embarked INS *Viraat* to catch a glimpse of naval capabilities — including weapon firing — demonstrated through a series of structured exercises. The efficacy of the Barak missile was in clear

evidence, as the missile unerringly engaged an incoming surface-to-surface missile.

Earthquake Relief Operations in Indonesia

- On the 28th of May, portions of central Indonesia were devastated by a major earthquake. Immediately upon learning of the tragedy, 'Operation RAHAT-2' was mounted by the Indian Navy, under the aegis of the HQIDS, to provide humanitarian assistance to the thousands of earthquake stricken people of Java. *INS Rajput*, which was on a routine deployment in the area, was immediately diverted to Java to provide urgently needed medical aid and relief supplies. This was followed-up by a relief mission by *INS Tabar*. Capitalising on the experiences of the huge disaster-relief operations undertaken by the Indian navy in the aftermath of the *tsunami* of December 2004, ships of the Indian Navy now carry a composite package of disaster-relief items, known as a 'brick'. This enabled the *Rajput* to provide the Indonesian people with meaningful assistance literally within hours of the earthquake.

Flood-Relief Operations

- In July and August of 2006, unprecedented heavy and incessant rains in several coastal areas of the country caused widespread damage and distress to tens of thousands of people in the country. Responding to the national requirement for urgent rescue and relief, the Indian Navy deployed diving and medical teams in flood-affected districts of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh.
- Sustained rescue and relief operations in the face of difficult conditions led to the successful evacuation of just under 600 persons from flood affected areas such as Nanded, Hudgaon, Nasik, Shirdi, Kopergaon, Prakasha and Shahada, quite apart from the setting-up of medical camps and the distribution of food packets and provision of medical assistance.

- Similarly, naval diving teams deployed at Hazira evacuated 130 people from the Hazira Gas Plant, while Indian Naval helicopters sortied from Mumbai and Daman to air-drop food and water around Surat.
- In Andhra Pradesh, diving teams were deployed in the Bhadrachalam and Konavaram area, to evacuate people from a number of inaccessible and isolated areas. In several cases, Indian Naval doctors and paramedical staff, along with their medical stores and equipment, were transported to the relief camps set-up by the Naval Diving Teams, by helicopters and boats. In addition the Navy distributed 1,800 packets of food, cooking oil, and, water. Likewise, in the Amalapuram area, naval diving teams rescued about 180 people and distributed 1,900 packets of food, water, and cooking oil. In West Godavari District, too, naval teams offered relief at Polavaram, while naval Chetak helicopters ex-Visakhapatnam were re-deployed at Rajamundry for the distribution of food, water, and essential supplies.
- The navy was deployed even in the ‘seas of sand’ surrounding the Barmer district of Rajasthan, which had been particularly badly affected by the flooding caused by unseasonal rains. Salvage teams from the Indian navy’s diving organisation recovered 66 bodies in an area of 15-20 km around Kawas and Malba villages.

Medical Cover

- In visible manifestation of the Indian Navy’s commitment to ‘jointness’ in both word and deed, quite apart from the medical camps established in support of disaster-relief operations, Indian Naval doctors and Medical Assistants also served, throughout 2006, alongside their Army and Air Force brethren in the frontier areas of Leh, Udhampur and the Siachen glacier.
- On the regional level, too, the Indian Navy’s medical personnel did their Service and the nation proud. A team of doctors has only recently completed its attachment with the UN in Congo, while

another team of five doctors and three paramedics embarked the hospital ship, USNS *Mercy*, for a five month humanitarian mission in several countries in the Pacific region, as also in South-east Asia.

Foreign Cooperation

- 2006 was also a landmark year in that it witnessed the imparting of a very significant thrust to the execution of the diplomatic role of the Indian Navy.
- Commencing with organisational stabilisation of the newly created Foreign Cooperation organisation under a two-star admiral (the ACNS [FCI]), this thrust manifested itself in vigorous Foreign Cooperation endeavours across the board. The focussed attention that has resulted over the past twelve months has already yielded significant gains, with the promise of much more to come — ‘sooner’, rather than ‘later’. ‘Constructive Engagement’ has been established as the principal mechanism to progress security, stability, and, tranquillity, in the Indian Ocean Region. The degree of interaction with regional and extra-regional maritime powers has been very significant and markedly greater in scope and content than was the case hitherto. Substantial progress was achieved, particularly in the immediate maritime neighbourhood of India. Several notable initiatives were launched for the sharing and/or gaining of operational and doctrinal expertise, transformational experiences, examining and imbibing ‘best-practices’, generating inter-operability, and, enhancing Maritime Domain Awareness through a variety of information-sharing processes. All this was greatly facilitated by the institution of Navy-to-Navy Staff Talks with a number of regional and extra-regional maritime powers.
- The year saw the Indian Navy intensively engaged in the conduct of very advanced and sophisticated ‘combined exercises’ with the navies of the USA, France and the UK, incorporating the latest nuclear-propelled submarines and aircraft carriers, state-of-the-art warships and aircraft, and, cutting-edge technologies. Our ships

and submarines effected port-calls in support of our foreign-policy, in a large number of countries of interest, while technical and professional delegations from the Indian Navy interacted with their counterparts abroad to progress Indian-led initiatives in terms of professional training, joint-development ventures, and, the transfer of high-end technology. The Indian Navy was actively engaged in the process of capacity-building and capability-enhancement within the region. This was typified by the formal transfer, on 16th of April, of a modern fast Patrol Craft, (the erstwhile *INS Tillanchang*) to the Republic of Maldives, where she now serves as the *Huravee*. The hydrographic assistance provided by the Indian Navy to the Maldives, Seychelles, and, Mauritius, were further manifestations of the Indian Navy's commitment to capacity-building and capability-enhancement. This commitment also found expression in the conduct of coordinated patrols between the Indian Navy and the navies of Indonesia, Thailand and Sri Lanka. This year's edition of the 'MILAN' series of regional naval interactions, held at Port Blair in January of this year, witnessed participation by as many as eight regional navies. The alphabetical listing of participating navies included those of Australia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and, Thailand. The confidence that successive editions of 'MILAN' has evoked was evident in the fact that the Union of Myanmar too, departed from its policy of distant reserve and, for the first time, sent a ship to participate in 'MILAN-2006'. The participants discussed issues germane to regional maritime security, including, *inter alia*, the security of Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs), the threat posed by non-State actors (including pirates and terrorist groups), the preservation and optimal exploitation of the maritime environment, and, cooperative mechanisms for the speedy provision of humanitarian aid and disaster-relief operations.

Non-Combatant Evacuation Ops : Lebanon

- 'Operation SUKOON' was launched in July 2006 for the evacuation of civilians from war-torn Lebanon. A flotilla of four Indian Naval Ships of the Western Fleet (*Mumbai*, *Brahmaputra*,

Betwa and Shakti), under the command of the Flag Officer Commanding Western Fleet (FOCWF), Rear Admiral Anup Singh, were on a routine deployment in the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, when the war clouds looming over Lebanon broke with startling suddenness and ferocity . Faced with clear and present danger, a large number of the expatriate population in Lebanon found themselves in urgent need of evacuation to safety. With the succour of distressed Indian nationals being the need of the hour, the Indian warships were diverted for what came to be the largest post-Independence civilian-evacuation operation undertaken by the Indian Navy. In consultation with the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of External Affairs and the Missions in Lebanon and Cyprus, the Indian Navy repeatedly ran the gauntlet of the war zone promulgated by Israel and evacuated 2,280 stranded men, women and children, from Beirut to Larnaca in Cyprus. Apart from Indians, this number included nationals of Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Lebanon. In fact, India was the only country whose evacuation operation extended beyond its own nationals, and, vividly demonstrated India's pan-regional concern and response.

Year of the Sailor

- In recognition of the Indian Navy's most valuable war-winning asset, the year 2006 was dedicated to the indomitable spirit of the sailors and declared as the 'Year of the Sailor' (YOTS). The principal aim was to focus the attention of the nation on issues relevant to sailors and the material, personal, and material well-being. As might be expected, a number of navy-wide initiatives were launched for the benefit of these indomitable matelots, so as enhance the degree of their self-empowerment, to meet their aspirations, and improve their standard of living.

Shaping our Human Resource

Sports and adventure occupy an important precedence in the Navy as these activities contribute in great measure towards grooming

traits in our personnel so as to prepare them for facing challenges against all odds confidently and efficiently. Adventure activities, in particular help break out of the mundane routine that often besets during peacetime and help instil contact with courage. Sports, likewise has received great attention and our sportsmen have won many laurels at national and international levels. Many of our activities in the adventure arena too have brought laurels to the Navy and to India.

Tarangini. The sail training ship Tarangini is scheduled to depart India on 09 Jan 07 (return 31 Oct 07) to participate in the 50th anniversary celebrations of Naval War College and Tall Ship Races off the Atlantic Coast scheduled 31 May – 16 Jul 07. Cadets from friendly foreign navies would also be invited to participate during the voyage.

Mission South Pole. A ten member team of Naval officers and sailors was flagged off on 16 Nov 06 to Ski traverse to the South Pole in Dec 06. The expedition has been named 'Dakshin Dhruv'.

Sky Diving. The IN Sports Sky diving team comprises the only AFF (Automatic Free Fall) Instructors in India. As the naval mountaineers traverse to the South Pole, the Skydivers are set to make the first ever training skydive over the white continent of Antarctic. The two instructors who plan to drop into a freefall from about 10000 feet along with their student (Ms Shital Mahajan, recipient of the National Adventure Award 2006 for her para-jump over the Arctic) will achieve speeds upto 220 Kmph before they deploy the student's (and own) parachutes.

Project ' Sagar Praikrama. A solo circumnavigation voyage has been planned during end 2008-mid 2009 to be undertaken by Cdr Dilip Donde. A new boat for the Voyage is planned to be built by end 2007.

Asian Games Participation. At present, nine Naval sportsmen have been selected to represent the country in the forthcoming Asian Games scheduled to be held at Doha. The Naval sportsmen are participating in Yachting (Laser & Match Racing), Best Physique, Shooting (Pistol), Gymnastics and Kabaddi.