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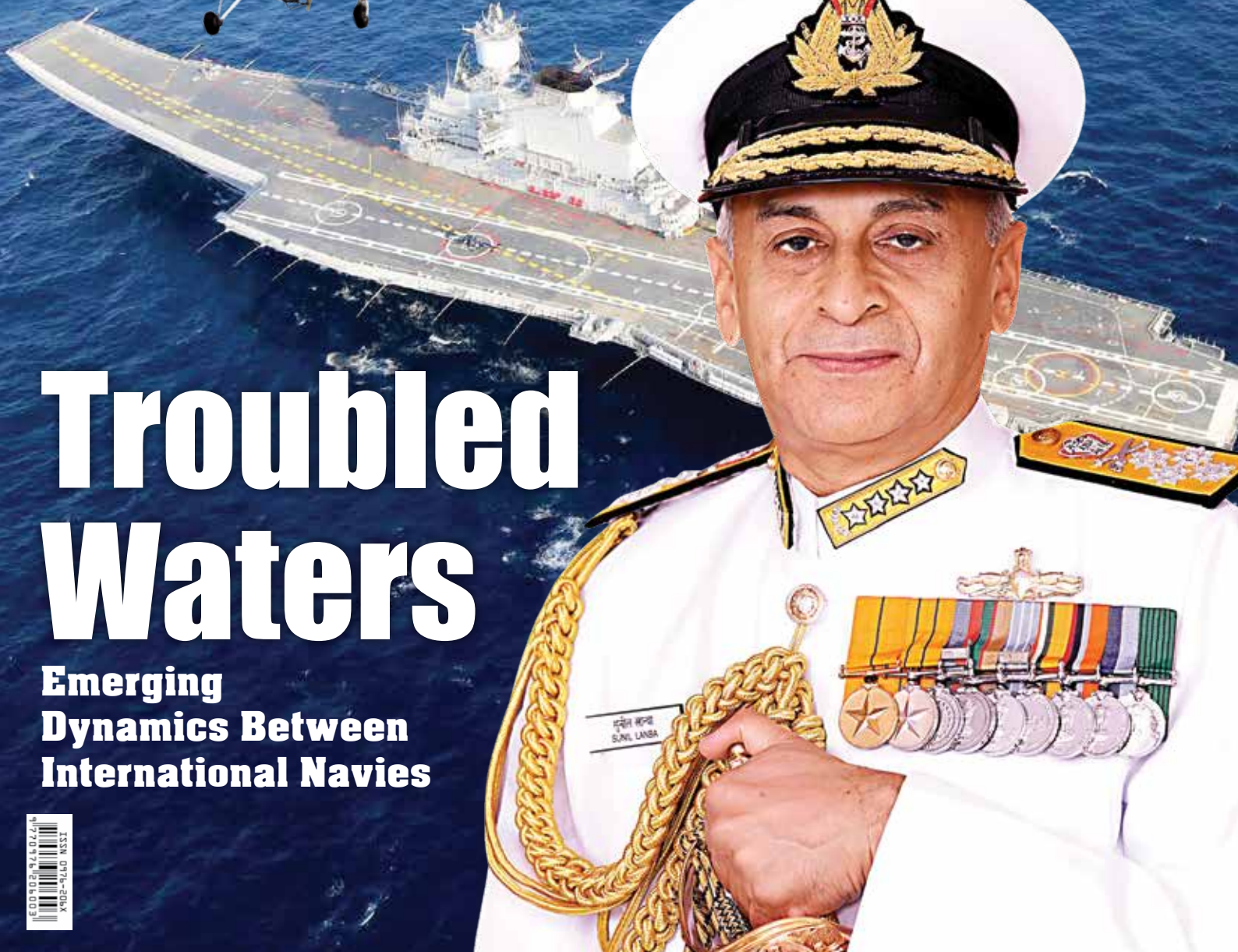
DECEMBER 2016

INDIA: ₹ 150
VOLUME 8 ISSUE 3

The First and Only **ISO 9001:2008 Certified** Defence and Security Magazine in India

DSATM

THE ONLY MAGAZINE AVAILABLE ON THE
INTRANET OF THE INDIAN AIR FORCE



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Dynamics Between
International Navies



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TALKING ABOUT STRATEGY ON TROUBLED WATERS

The present Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Sunil Lanba, PVSM, AVSM, ADC of the Indian Navy. He has served as the Vice Chief of the Naval Staff, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Western and Southern Naval Commands. He has also served as the Commandant of the National Defence College. In this exclusive and intensive interview with DSA, he outlines the Indian Navy's (IN) strategies over troubled waters as well as the landmark changes that the IN has undergone since Independence.

Defence & Security Alert: You have recently ascended to the helm of one of the largest and the finest naval forces in the world. Please share with DSA readers, the important turning points during the eventful journey of the Indian Navy (IN) since its inception to the blue waters?

Chief of Naval Staff: The Indian Navy has come a long way since its inception. From a small force of 33 vessels suitable for coastal patrol at the time of Independence, our Navy has grown to around 140 ships and submarines and about 240 aircraft today. In my view, the journey since the independence can be mapped along three main contours.

The first is the progressive movement of the Indian Navy from a surface naval force to a multi-dimensional, multi-spectrum, networked force. The addition of the naval air arm in 1953, followed by the induction of India's first aircraft carrier in 1961 took the Navy into the air, over land, over sea, and from the sea. The induction of *INS Kalvari*, a Foxtrot class submarine, in 1967 ushered in the undersea dimension and submarine arm into the Navy, even as lease of the first *INS Chakra* in 1987 took it into the nuclear propulsion undersea. The acquisition of the OSA-class missile boats in 1971 took the Indian Navy into missile warfare. The progressive induction of the Landing Ship Tank (Medium), Landing Ship Tank (Large) and the Landing Platform Dock gave boost to the Navy's ability to conduct and support amphibious operations. The establishment of the Marine Commando (MARCO) force, in 1987, brought in the Special Forces component and finally the launch of GSAT-17, the naval communications satellite in 2013 took the Indian Navy into space and enabled it to become a networked force. The Indian Navy today has an operational footprint in

the blue waters of the Indian Ocean Region and beyond to carry out a variety of operations across the spectrum.

The second contour for our Navy has been its transformational journey to becoming a 'Builder's Navy' from a 'Buyer's Navy'. India's first indigenous warship was commissioned in 1961 and the 126th indigenous warship is being commissioned this month. Self-reliance has been the guiding principle of the Indian Navy's perspective plans, which provide the overarching direction for our force build-up. It is a matter of significant achievement that the modernisation programme of the Navy is focussed on indigenous warship construction and is largely driven by the Indian shipyards and the industry. The Indian Navy's Design Organisation, which completed 52 years since its inception in 1964, has come a long way. Today, the Indian Navy prides itself as one of the few navies of the world, which has matured ship design capabilities of its own, ranging from fast attack craft to aircraft carrier. Our quest for indigenisation has resulted in the public sector shipyards having their order books full with warship and submarine construction. Even some private shipyards have been awarded contracts for warship building and we hope that this will further augment our national capabilities. The Indian Navy has 42 ships and submarines currently on order, all in Indian shipyards.

Naval operations have been the third contour along which our Navy has progressed. The Indian Navy has made significant contributions right from the Independence in the *Junagadh Operations* 1947, in both theatres in 1971, the *IPKF operations* 1987-90, *Operation Cactus* off Maldives 1988, and deployments during *Kargil War* and *Operation Parakram*. Over the past decade, our Navy has deployed for various Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)





Admiral Sunil Lanba in his office during the interview with Publisher & CEO Pawan Agrawal and President Urvashi J Agrawal of DSA magazine

operations and also contributed significantly to maritime security operations, such as the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), surveillance and patrols, coordinated patrols, anti-piracy operations and Non-combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO) in the Indian Ocean and beyond.

DSA: In view of emerging dynamics between international navies, regional and global geopolitics, maritime capability enhancements in our neighbourhood, the operating environment for IN is challenging. What is your vision and road map for our “warriors in white”?

CNS: In order to contribute effectively the nation’s geopolitical aspirations and developmental to goals, the Indian Navy will grow and develop in an appropriately balanced manner. To effectively confront the multifarious challenges that are emerging in the complex maritime environment, the Indian Navy will strengthen itself continuously as a formidable, multi-dimensional and networked force that would maintain high readiness at all times to protect India’s maritime interests, safeguard her seaward frontiers and defeat all maritime threats in our areas of interests.

To achieve this, we would optimise every resource, embrace innovation and maximise indigenisation and self-reliance, to generate credible combat power for accomplishing missions across full spectrum of naval operations. Quality maintenance, timely infrastructure

modernisation and efficient logistics management for achieving optimal performance would enable this process.

This would not be possible without development of effective leadership at all levels to generate highly motivated and skilled professionals, who will together make the Navy a taut, efficient and happy service.

DSA: The launch of Guided Missile Destroyer, *Mormugao* is a milestone in IN’s support of *Make in India* initiative. Please elucidate on the capabilities of this warship. Is the IN on track, as far as its modernisation programme is concerned? If not, what is holding it back?

CNS: Four guided missile destroyers of *Project 15B* are under construction at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), Mumbai. The design of *P15B* ships has been developed in-house by the Directorate of Naval Design. These ships are amongst the most technologically advanced guided missile destroyers of the world, with state-of-the-art weapon and sensor package, advanced stealth features and a high degree of automation.

The *P15B* destroyers incorporate new design concepts for improved survivability, sea-keeping, stealth and ship maneuverability. These ships will be equipped to carry and operate two multi-role helicopters. The ships’ fire power will consist of vertically launched Surface-to-Air Missiles (SAMs) and Surface-to-Surface Missiles (SSMs). In keeping with our commitment towards *Make in India*,



this class of ship has significantly high indigenous content, in the form of weapons, machinery and material. These ships showcase the nation's growing capability in developing and delivering complex warships, which serves as a true hallmark of self-reliance attained by our country in warship design and construction.

Let me assure the readers that the modernisation plan of the Indian Navy is progressing as envisaged in the Maritime Capability Perspective Plan and is very much 'on track'.

DSA: India's submarine programme continues to struggle and the submarine fleet is far below the comfort levels of the IN. This criticality assumes greater importance with China increasing its assertiveness and India too seeking to play a greater role in the region. How do you visualise to address this exigency in a time bound manner?

CNS: There have been some delays in our submarine acquisition plans owing to unforeseen developments but let me assure the readers that the Indian Navy's submarine force remains potent and capable. The Indian Navy, as a professional force, monitors all developments and deployments that may affect us and factors these into our operational strategy and plans.

As you would be aware, most of the submarines that we operate have already been modernised and upgraded in terms of their weapon-sensor suites as well as crew-support systems. Further, the Government has also approved Medium-Refit-cum-Life-Certification in respect to four Sindhughosh class and two Shishumar class submarines in a phased manner.

You also would be aware that *Kalvari*, the first of the six P-75 submarines, is already undergoing trials and is likely to be inducted by March 2017. I expect the entire *Scorpene* fleet to be inducted by 2020.

Meanwhile, the case for procurement of six submarines under *Project 75(I)* is also being actively pursued. These modern conventional submarines would be constructed at an Indian shipyard with transfer of technology from a foreign collaborator under the ambit of the Strategic Partnership Model, the guidelines for which are under finalisation at the Ministry of Defence.

DSA: The current security environment warrants full spectrum capabilities from Low Intensity Maritime Operations to conventional warfare and nuclear deterrence. How well prepared and combat ready is the IN?

CNS: The Indian Navy continuously monitors our areas of interest and undertakes regular evaluation of our maritime security environment. The Indian Navy, today, is a multi-dimensional, versatile force, capable of undertaking operations across a complete spectrum of conflict ranging from Low Intensity Maritime Operations (LIMO) to nuclear deterrence. Our ships and aircraft regularly deploy, in support of our national interests, from the Western Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean.

Our core war-fighting skills are continuously honed through regular fleet exercises.

In addition, our major exercises including the Theatre Level Operational Readiness Exercise (TROPEX), conducted annually, hones war-fighting skills at the theatre level. In order to evaluate our performance relative to the other Navies and to exchange the best practices, the Indian Navy also conducts exercises with foreign Navies and these exercises serve to enhance interoperability, facilitate benchmarking of our own capabilities and contribute towards overall peace and stability in our areas of interest.

Our war-fighting skills go hand-in-hand with our capability development. The Maritime Capability Perspective Plan envisage accretions which would augment our capability to undertake a multitude of operations across the spectrum of conflict.

DSA: Sea piracy, drug trafficking, illegal arms trade, human trafficking and now also maritime terrorism are spreading their tentacles in the Asia Pacific and beyond. What measures do you propose to counter these scourges? How have Joint Operation Centres helped in improving the coastal security apparatus?

CNS: As you would be aware non-traditional threats are increasingly threatening maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and beyond. A number of incidents over the past few years are indicative of the ever present threats to maritime security from terrorists. Piracy off the coast of Somalia has been effectively suppressed by sustained efforts of all stakeholders-navies, coast guards, shipping industry and more importantly, the seafarers themselves.

The construct for maritime security in India has constantly evolved to meet the growing challenges. Post 26/11 attacks, a slew of measures have been instituted by the Government of India to strengthen maritime and coastal security. These measures broadly include improving maritime domain awareness, strengthening inter-agency linkages and capacity and capability enhancement of individual maritime security agencies. Further, several measures have been taken to regulate Indian fishing sector for improving maritime security. Review mechanisms from the district to the national level have also been institutionalised, facilitating regular review and monitoring of implementation of various measures. While significant progress has been made, there is scope and need to address the several imminent challenges to maritime security.

The four Joint Operation Centres (JOCs), established post 26/11 attacks, are manned 24x7 by representatives from multiple agencies such as the Indian Navy, Indian Coast Guard and the police. These JOCs are supported by the Operational Centres and the Control Rooms of the multiple stakeholders and the State administration through institutional linkages. The JOCs are equipped to handle information from multiple sources and this arrangement has facilitated improved domain awareness, information flow, inter-agency coordination and coordinated response to emergent situations.



Admiral Sunil Lanba receiving the DSA editions from Publisher & CEO Pawan Agrawal and President Urvashi J Agrawal

DSA: Maritime powers have used naval diplomacy for building 'bridges of friendship' and strengthening bilateral and multilateral cooperation among nations. Earlier this year, the IN hosted the International Fleet Review 2016 and displayed its naval prowess to the world. How do you propose to use Naval Diplomacy to add maritime muscle during your leadership?

CNS: The Navy is an instrument of the state and reflects the state's aspirations, strengths and value system, and as an extension, naval diplomacy plays a pivotal role in realising the country's Foreign Cooperation (FC) objectives. In reflection of this reality and in keeping with the changing global order, our international maritime engagement with our maritime neighbours has grown rapidly over the last few years. The Navy-to-Navy cooperation is a military activity that is intended to shape the operational environment during peacetime in order to leverage relationships and goodwill generated when required. As a natural extension every interaction that the Indian Navy has with a naval or maritime force of any nation has significant potential to contribute to our own maritime security objectives.

The desired end state of our foreign cooperation initiatives, therefore, is to foster a sense of confidence amongst the maritime forces of the Indian Ocean littorals of the reliability and capability of the Indian Navy as a preferred partner to facilitate and improve the net maritime security in the region while simultaneously, being engaged in professional exchanges with a wide range of navies across the globe.

DSA: From a mere geopolitical entity, 'Indo-Pacific' has metamorphosed into a unique geostrategic theatre of global importance. What is the relevance and the significance of the 'Indo-Pacific' to India's maritime interests in the troubled waters?

CNS: The dependence on the seas, the world-over, is increasing. More than 120,000 ships transit through the IOR and nearly 80 per cent of the sea trade is extra-regional. About two-thirds of the sea trade through the IOR is with countries on the Pacific Ocean Rim. Coupled with the fact that the wider Indo-Pacific region is home to nearly three billion people, has a combined Gross Domestic Product of nearly US \$ 20 trillion and home to three of the four largest economies in the world viz China, India and Japan, the strategic importance which the Indo-Pacific region holds cannot be missed. The term 'Indo-Pacific' is, therefore, a geo-strategic concept of the 21st century that recognises the seamless connectivity in historic, economic and strategic terms between these two oceans and their rimlands. It underlines the importance of looking at this region as a larger, closely linked entity, with mutual interests, influences and implications. The core strands binding the Indo-Pacific are essentially maritime in nature.

India's unique geo-strategic position, natural reach in all directions extended by our island territories in the Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep Island groups, and the ever growing maritime interests in the region require the Indian Navy to play an active role for a positive, stable and secure maritime environment that is conducive to mutual growth and prosperity. Hence, the Indo-Pacific and India's maritime interests are closely intertwined in the 21st century. **DSA**