

INS Karanj boosts Navy's firepower

The Navy's third state-of-the-art Scorpene class submarine, *INS Karanj*, was launched by Reena Lanba, wife of Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Sunil Lanba, here on Wednesday. The new submarine is named after the earlier Kalvari class *INS Karanj*, which was decommissioned in 2003.

Six Scorpene class submarines are being built under Project 75 by the Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDSL), Mumbai, under a \$3.75 billion technology transfer signed in October 2005 with the Naval Group of France. However, the programme has been delayed by four years due to construction delays. On Tuesday, the Prime Minister's Office conveyed its annoyance to the Defence Ministry for not taking stringent action against the Naval Group and MDSL for the delay.

Admiral Lanba said, "MDSL and the Naval Group have put their houses in order and we have seen quick launches of the first three boats. I am quite confident that they have learnt from the experience of building and commissioning the first boat. I do not foresee any more delays in the programme."

The Scorpene class is the Navy's first modern conventional submarine series in almost two decades, since *INS Sindhushastra* was procured from Russia in July 2000.

"*INS Karanj* saw action in the 1971 War and I am sure that this new incarnation will live up to its legendary namesake," the Navy chief said, adding that he expected the new *Karanj* to be commissioned by the end of the year.

Wednesday's launch follows the launch of the first two Scorpene submarines — *INS Kalvari* and *INS Khanderi*.

INS Kalvari, the first to be launched, was commissioned in December 2017 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. *INS Khanderi*, which was launched in January 2017, is currently undergoing deep dive trials and is expected to be commissioned later this year, according to Navy officials.

'Speedy delivery'

Admiral Lanba said he expected timely construction and speedy delivery of the remaining three submarines — *Vela*, *Vagir* and *Vagsheer*. "The three submarines are in various stages of outfitting. The entire project is expected to be completed by 2020," a defence official said.

"Today's launch should mark an eventful 2018," said MDSL's chairman and managing director Rakesh Anand. He also said that MDSL is in the process of upgrading and would soon have the capability to build and launch two lines of submarines.

INS Kalvari, manned by a team of eight officers and 35 sailors, carries sea-skimming SM39 Exocet missiles and the heavyweight wire-guided Surface and Underwater Target (SUT) torpedoes. For self-defence, it has mobile anti-torpedo decoys.

(With inputs from Dinakar Peri in Delhi)

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