

## Navy confident of commissioning aircraft carrier *Vikrant* in two years

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 Rs. 3,200 crore, which was subsequently revised to Rs. 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 to 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.

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