

INDIA'S FIRST MISSILE TRACKING SHIP IS READYING FOR SEA TRIALS

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Once ready, it will be India's first, a force multiplier and cruise the country into a global elite club. Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL) is gearing up to undertake sea trials of India's first missile tracking ship by the first week of October.

The keel of the ship, which was laid on June 30, 2014, is being built for the National Technical Research Organisation, the technical intelligence agency working directly under the supervision of the Prime Minister's Office and the National Security Adviser.

Considered a "topmost secret project", a lot of confidentiality is being maintained in executing the project costing about Rs. 750 crore. It will be named after its induction into the Indian Navy. For now, it is simply referred as VC 11184.

Strategic weapons prog.

This will be the first of its kind ocean surveillance ship being built as part of the efforts under the NDA government to strengthen the country's strategic weapons programme.

When asked about the commencement of sea trials, HSL Chairman and Managing Director Rear Admiral L.V. Sarat Babu told The Hindu that the sea trials would be carried out either by September-end or the first week of October and they were confident of handing over the vessel to the Indian Navy by the year-end. "This would put India in the elite of club of a few countries that have such a sophisticated ocean surveillance ship," the Rear Admiral pointed out.

Declining to comment further, he said they had successfully completed the basin trials sometime ago.

300-strong crew

The ship was built inside the covered dry dock. It has the capacity to carry 300-strong crew with hi-tech gadgets and communication equipment, powered by two diesel engines, and a large deck capable of helicopter landing.

HSL, set up in 1941, achieved a total income of Rs. 651.67 crore and a value of production of Rs. 644.78 crore during 2017-18, the highest since inception. It is poised to get orders for construction of five fleet support ships costing Rs. 9,000 crore and finalise request for proposal for design collaborator for construction of two Special Operation Vessels called mini submarines. It is also banking on the order for medium refit of Russia-made third Sindhughosh class submarine INS Sindhuratna for which it has submitted technical bids.

Visakhapatnam is considered a strategic location on the East Coast for the Indian defence forces as it is home for Ship Building Centre to build nuclear powered submarine INS Arihant class, Naval Alternate Operational Base at Rambilli, the second naval base after Eastern Naval Command headquarters, training centre for Marine Commandos and headquarters of the submarine arm.

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