

## **INDO- FRENCH NAVAL EXERCISE VARUNA TAKES OFF IN THE GULF OF ADEN**

### **ARMY AND IAF PERSONNEL ALSO EMBARKED ON NAVAL SHIPS**

New Delhi: November 23,2005

Five ships of the Western Fleet and one submarine under the tactical command of the Flag Officer Commanding Western Fleet, Rear Admiral RF Contractor are on an overseas deployment to the Gulf of Aden for Indo-French naval exercise Varuna. The group consists of aircraft carrier Viraat, guided missile destroyer Mysore, guided missile frigates Talwar and Godavari and tanker Aditya. From the French side, La Fayette (guided missile frigate), Jacoubet (ASW corvette), Perle (nuclear submarine), shore based Atlantique (MRASW) and Mirage 2000 (fighter) aircraft are taking part in the exercise.

The ships except Viraat and Talwar are visiting Djibouti from 19 to 22 Nov. The visit to Djibouti, apart from reaffirming our friendship would also witness professional interaction with the French Navy based at the port. IN-FN joint exercise, being conducted from 22 and 24 November, is the seventh of the series since 2001 and the second this year. The joint exercises have grown in scope and complexity over the years and facilitated mutual learning and interoperability. During this exercise, the thrust would be on dissimilar air combat between Sea Harriers and French Mirages, air defence exercises, intermediate and advanced level anti-submarine warfare, maritime interdiction operations and compliant and non-compliant boarding operations. Another highlight is the professional interaction of the naval marine commandoes and Army troops with French Special Forces. Incidentally, one platoon of Army personnel and four IAF pilots are embarked on IN ships for interaction with their French counterparts. This is the first time that the Indian aircraft carrier Viraat is participating in Varuna series of exercises. Last year in April 2004, the French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle had formed part of their task force.

The Indian Navy lays great emphasis on enhancing bilateral ties and improving mutual understanding & interoperability with developed navies through professional & operational interaction. Reciprocal ship visits build bridges of friendship and meet the objective of spreading the message of peace and goodwill. The exercises will provide the opportunity to showcase our ship building capability through the indigenously built ships Mysore, Godavari and Aditya as also our ability to align and keep pace with the rapid technological advancements in the field of military hardware and systems.

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