

# Joint naval exercise with British navy on

The manoeuvres will end on May 29

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MUMBAI: Indian Navy and the British Royal Navy are staging a joint tactical exercise, Konkan 06, off the west coast, between Goa and Mumbai. It is a fully simulated naval war.

The first part of the Konkan 06, harbour phase is under way. It includes collective planning of the operation and training.

The second phase would be the combat part that includes surface and anti-submarine warfare in multi-threat scenario, naval air warfare, command and control warfare and fleet air defence, according to Captain Abhay Lambhate, a naval spokesman here.

The exercise that began on May 17 will continue till May 29.

The action also includes cross-deck flying in which helicopters of both the navies will land and take off from each other's warships, search and rescue missions and naval gun support.

Rear Admiral Anoop Singh, Flag Officer Commanding Western Fleet is leading the Indian task group flying his flag on missile destroyer INS Mumbai.

Other warships are missiles frigates INS Ganga, INS Brahmaputra and INS Godavari, hunter-killer submarine, INS Shankush support vessel, INS Shakti.

The Royal Navy's participants are HMS Illustrious, an aircraft carrier of 22000-ton displacement, having a squadron of Harrier GR7 ground attack aircraft, a joint force of the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force. The carrier flies the flag of UK Maritime Forces Commander, Rear Admiral Neil Morisetti.

The British carrier is accompanied by HMS Gloucester,

● Konkan 06 off the western coast

● The second phase will be the combat part

● Action includes cross-deck flying

● British submarine is also a part of the group

5200-ton destroyer and Royal Fleet Auxiliary Ships Fort Victoria and Diligence.

## Interesting aspect

But the interesting aspect of the U.K. task group is the presence of French stealth frigate of Lafayette class, FS Surcouf, in its ranks.

A British submarine is also a part of the group. According to a maritime source, the British submarine could be nuclear-powered HMS Sovereign.

The Illustrious is also having Sea King airborne early warning (AEW) helicopters and Merlin anti-submarine choppers. The carrier operates as both, strike and command ship.

The Illustrious task group is on a long operational deployment called, Aquila 06 in the Indian Ocean region and besides demonstrating Britain's ability to deploy, operate and sustain a maritime task force, it is also supporting the coalition forces.

## Shift in role

The Konkan 06 is significant because of the shift in the role of the British aircraft carriers, from sea control of the Cold War era to that of maritime strike and air operations against land targets in littoral environment.

The group has exercised with French, American, Omani and Pakistani navies in the region.

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# Blair raises pitch for India's UNSC bid



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BRITISH PRIME Minister Tony Blair has come out strongly in favour of India's candidacy for a permanent seat in an expanded UN Security Council, but the US appeared to be lukewarm to the idea "at this point".

"A Security Council that has France as a permanent member, but not Germany; Britain, but not Japan; China, but not India - to say nothing about the absence of proper representation from Latin America or Africa - cannot be legitimate in the modern world", Blair told students of Georgetown University here on Friday.

"I used to think this problem was intractable. The competing interests are so strong. But I'm now sure we need reform. If

necessary, let us agree to some form of interim change that can be a bridge to a future settlement. But we need to get it done", Blair said in response to a question.

Asked to comment specifically on Blair's call for India to be a part of the permanent membership of the Security Council, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said that, while discussions were going on on several aspects related to the UN, there was no change in the current American policy of pushing only for Japan at the present time.

"... There are a number of different plans out there for Security Council reform. This was a hot topic just towards the end of last year. It's still a topic about which we have had conversations with India, with Japan, with other countries that are interested in gaining a seat on the Security Council", he said. "At this

point, the only country for which we've come out in favour of a Security Council seat is Japan. And there is, at this point, no change to that", he added.

Pointing out that the international institutional infrastructure of the post-World War II era did not represent the reality of 2006, Blair questioned the legitimacy of the permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council in the current scheme of things.

McCormack also said, "At this point, we're working on all aspects of UN reform. We've run into some trouble on that, I think, as you can see in the newspapers. And on Security Council reform, it's really at the point, still, of discussion among various states, various states floating various different proposals". Blair focussed on different aspects of UN reform that are currently of interest to many industrialised nations.