

(a) whether Navy's submarine INS Sindhurakshak laden with warheads sank with series of explosions at Mumbai naval dockyard, if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether Government has inquired into the explosions and sinking of INS Sindhurakshak;

(c) if so, the details thereof along with the outcome thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) how Government would meet the operational availability of submarines which is as low as 48 per cent due to the ageing fleet as per the report of CAG after the INS Sindhurakshak incident?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) An internal explosion occurred onboard INS Sindhurakshak around midnight on 13/14th August, 2013 in the forward compartment, where ordnance was stowed, resulting in major fire onboard. The submarine is presently submerged and resting at the bottom at the Naval Dockyard, Mumbai.

(b) and (c) A Board of Inquiry (BoI) has been constituted by Indian Navy to investigate into the circumstances leading to the incident. The submarine which is submerged in the water is not accessible due to severe deformation of the interiors after the explosion and fire, as also due to poor visibility under water and siltation. The exact cause of explosion can only be established post salvage of the submarine. The efforts to salvage the submarine are being undertaken. The BoI would finalise its report post salvage of the submarine.

(d) Government has an approved submarine building plan which is being progressed. Further, a proposal for extending service life of six submarines is also being examined.

Private sector entry into domestic aerospace arena

657. SHRI M.P. ACHUTHAN:

SHRI D. RAJA:

SHRI BALWINDER SINGH BHUNDER:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government has a proposal under consideration to promote private sector entry into the domestic aerospace arena through the proposed Rs. 13,000 crore project to supply 56 transport aircraft to the Indian Air Force (IAF);

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether it is a fact that the State run Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has no role in this project and if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (c) A proposal to procure 56 transport aircraft as replacement for AVRO aircraft through 'Buy & Make' route has been accorded Acceptance of Necessity (AON) by the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) on 23rd July, 2012. Out of these, 40 aircraft will be manufactured in India by an Indian Production Agency (IPA) from the private sector. The IPA will be chosen by the Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM).

The IPA can be a Joint Venture (JV)/Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)/Consortium. PSUs/HAL can participate as part of such JV/SPV/Consortium. Some letters have been received wherein primary concern raised relates to denying opportunity to Public Sector Undertakings to participate in the procurement process. The concerns have been noted and the matter is under further consideration.

Induction of third aircraft carrier

658. SHRI H.K. DUA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has any plans to go in for a third aircraft carrier although INS Vikramaditya has been inducted into the Indian Navy;

(b) by when INS Virat, which has a limited operational life span left, is exactly going to be out of service; and

(c) whether Government is aware that China is going in for a second aircraft carrier and what are its implications for India's naval defence plans?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) Yes Sir. One more Aircraft Carrier, (to be named INS Vikrant), is currently under construction at M/s. Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL), Kochi.

(b) INS Viraat would be operational in accordance with the stipulated operational cycle.

(c) No authentic information is available. The Indian Navy is engaged in a continuous evaluation of the maritime security environment around our Maritime Areas of interest to meet any challenges that the country may encounter.