

Admiral Arun Prakash on significance of the



LCA (Navy) and the IAC

The ceremonial keel laying of India's first indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC) by then Defence Minister AK Antony on 1 March 2009 had marked a defining moment in more ways than one. The IAC project, languishing first on the design-board and then in MoD's musty files for nearly two decades, is the largest warship ever to be built in an Indian shipyard and represents the fruition of an Indian Navy (IN) dream. Linked to this "dream-boat" is another cherished vision: that one day a *swadeshi* fighter will be launched from the deck of the IAC: India's Light Combat Aircraft (Navy).

In both these projects the IN has ploughed a lonely furrow by placing trust in the capabilities of the DRDO and PSUs. The path may be strewn with detritus from earlier unsuccessful enterprises, and many voices of "nay-sayers" are being heard, but the IN needs to remain steady on course.

A joint feasibility study of LCA ship-borne operations undertaken by a team of naval architects and test pilots revealed that a safe ski-jump launch and arrested recovery, though feasible, would be just marginal with the current

ship configuration and aircraft engine thrust available. Consequently the IAC's deck length had to be increased by about 15 meters, and the redesigned ship now displaced 24,000 tons, with a corresponding increase in cost.



LCA (Navy) Mk.I (3002) landing at INAS Hansa