

**Nation's controversial submarine arrives**  
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Malaysia's first ever submarine was delivered today to colourful fanfare and royal visitors, in an acquisition that the government said "completes" the country's navy.

The Scorpene submarine, with 32 officers and crew members on board led by commanding officer Zulhelmy Ithnain, reached the jetty at 9.20am.

As the surfacing submarine, which were pulled by two tugboats, approached the jetty, some of its crew members were seen waving at the waiting crowd.

The KD Tunku Abdul Rahman, named after the nation's first prime minister, sailed into a grand reception at the navy's deepwater Pulau Indah base in Port Klang, an hour's drive from Kuala Lumpur.

A naval band struck up martial tunes as the jet-black vessel, decorated with bunting and with captain Zulhelmy in the viewing tower, docked at the pier, which was packed with Malaysian and foreign naval dignitaries.

Present to witness the submarine's arrival were Yang Di Pertuan Agong Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin, RMN's captain-in-chief Sultan of Selangor Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak and his deputy Muhyiddin Yassin, and Defence Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

**High commission paid to broker**

The European-made Scorpene submarine is the first of two commissioned from French contractor DCNS and Spain's Navantia for a combined total of RM3.4 billion.

The second submarine is scheduled for delivery in late 2009.

The two submarines have long attracted controversy since the deal was signed in 2002.

The opposition claims that a 540-million-ringgit commission was paid to Abdul Razak Baginda, a close associate of now-Premier Najib Razak, in brokering the deal.

The prime minister, who was at the ceremony, has denied there was any corruption in the deal, which was made when he was defence minister.

Tuanku Mizan, Sultan Sharafuddin, Najib, Muhyiddin, Ahmad Zahid, Raja Muda of Selangor Tengku Amir Shah, MAF chief, RMN chief and the IGP were then taken into the submarine for a tour.

After the visit, Tuanku Mizan launched the commemorative stamps and first day covers in conjunction with the submarine's arrival in the country.

KD TAR sailed from Toulon, France on July 11 and took 54 days to reach Port Klang, making stops at Jeddah, Djibouti and Cochin on the 6,000 journey, which included 32 days of submersion and 10 days of surfacing.

**A more credible and capable military**

Meanwhile, the king said that the acquisition of submarines for the RMN was the government's biggest commitment to enhancing the capability of its armed forces in safeguarding the sovereignty of Malaysian waters from any threat.

"The acquisition enables the RMN, in particular, and the Malaysian Armed Forces in general, to develop a more credible and capable military force in the region," said Tuanku Mizan.

Tuanku Mizan also expressed his pride with the spirit and determination shown by the KD TAR crew in completing their one-year training.

He said this would enable the RMN crew to compete with and be on par with the capable naval forces of other nations.

"I am aware that a submarine requires a crew with aptitude and that is highly skilled to operate and manage it," Tuanku Mizan said.

"I believe that you (crew) are the specially chosen and lucky ones to be the crew members of Malaysia's first submarine, which is the pride of the nation and which will spur Malaysians to strive for excellence to bring glory to the nation."

Tuanku Mizan hoped that the high-technology asset would be well maintained and fully utilised to ensure RMN's standing as a credible force in safeguarding the country's waters.

- *AFP, Bernama*

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