

Subs to be named after former PMs

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Royal Malaysian Navy will honour the country's first two prime ministers by naming their submarines after them.

Once *KD Tunku Abdul Rahman* and *KD Tun Razak*, which are expected to begin service in 2009, are named, the two vessels will be collectively known as the *Prime Minister* class.

The names were announced by RMN chief Admiral Tan Sri Ramlan Mohamed Ali in Spain on Tuesday, after the ceremonial joining of the two halves of the second sub at the Navantia dockyard in Cartagena, Spain. He said the decision on the names had been made recently by the Armed Forces Council.

The first sub had gone through a similar ceremony on March 14 at the Cherbourg dockyard in France.

Until they are officially launched and named, the subs will continue to be known as *Scorpene 1* and *Scorpene 2*.

Scorpene 1 will be named *KD Tunku Abdul Rahman* in a launching ceremony in Cherbourg in October, while *Scorpene 2* will be named *KD Tun Razak* in a similar ceremony scheduled for August next year in Cartagena.

The hull of the subs are now permanently joined and will only be broken when they are decommissioned.

Ramlan officiated the ceremony, witnessed by Vice Admiral Manuel Otero, Admiral of the Arsenal of Cartagena for the Spanish Navy.

The government had procured the two subs from Armaris of France. Under the agreement, the fore sections of the subs were built in Cherbourg while the aft sections were built in Cartagena.

With the joining of the two sections of *Scorpene 2*, the sub has successfully concluded a critical phase of its construction.

All major equipment and systems and the integration of all main cables, wires and pipes were incorporated in this phase.

The next phase will be the testing period at the port followed by sea tests off the waters of Cartagena.

The names for the subs were chosen from 801 entries in a competition launched in April last year. Several choices were shortlisted and given to the Council of Service Chiefs chaired by the armed forces chief before it was brought to the Armed Forces Council.