

MAKING WAVES

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Guj Ports to Get Electric Fencing With Breach Alarms

Ports in Gujarat are all set to get electric fencing with breach alarms as a part of the security measures undertaken by the Gujarat Maritime Board (GMB). This was decided at a recent meeting of the GMB in Gandhinagar with the Intelligence and the Navy. Captain S C Mathur, the Chief Nautical Officer of Gujarat Maritime Board, said: "For commercial ports such as Dahej, we will install electric barbwires with breach alarms. Any breach will be simultaneously notified at the Port Officer's office and the nearest police station and a signal would be sent out to the walkie-talkie sets of the policemen and the port security members."

Mathur said, to counter the threat from the sea, joint patrolling is being carried out by the Navy and the Coast Guard. Besides, the Superintendents of Police of the coastal districts have been asked to coordinate with the Navy and the Coast Guards to man the 1,600 km long coastline, he said. GMB officials said strict procedures would be applied for the registration of fishing vessels in the smaller ports of the state. "Although we register only trawlers and ships, we will also monitor the smaller boats in the state," said Mathur. He also debunked rumours that a lot of unscrupulous elements have entered the fishing industry lately. "They are checked by the Customs, the Fisheries Department and the local police and they have to get no-objection certificate from these departments before they can get registered with the Gujarat Maritime Board," added Mathur.

Source(s): Anupam Chakravarty, *The Indian Express*, Dec 02, 2008

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/Guj-ports-to-get-electric-fencing-with-breach-alarms/393055/>

Major Ports to Get Commando Units

Major ports in the country will soon have their own elite marine commando units on the lines of the National Security Guard, as part of their initiative to beef up security in the wake of November terrorist attacks on Mumbai. That the terrorists had landed in Mumbai by sea has all the more prompted the Shipping Ministry to lay out an elaborate plan to upgrade security levels in the ports. The Minister for Shipping and Surface Transport, Mr T.R. Baalu, had called a meeting in New Delhi with the chairmen of ports to review the security arrangements.

Sources said some of the major ports will have at least 60 commandos, equipped with modern security equipment. The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), which is in charge of security at the major ports, will train its men to be commandos. The elite team, which will be trained by the marine commandos of the Navy and the NSG, will be engaged only in the protection of the ports, the sources said. Further, ports have been asked to work closely with the local fishermen community and have frequent communication and dialogue with them on security-related issues.

After the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT), the Chennai Port Trust in May this year was the second major port to insure its assets, estimated at Rs 990 crore, against risks such as earthquake, tsunami, cyclone and even terrorist attacks. "The insurance cover is very crucial for ports after the Mumbai attacks," said a Chennai port official. "We are going ahead with setting up a commando unit. The port will be bearing the expenses of setting up the unit," Mr S.S. Hussain, Chairman of the port.

Source(s): *Seafarer*, Dec 3, 2008.

<http://seafarerblog.com/2008/12/03/major-ports-to-get-commando-units.html>.

Pakistan Now has Much-Enhanced Maritime Prowess

Over the years Islamabad has enhanced its naval prowess by overwhelming acquisition of fleet from UK, France, China and the US. According to a detailed report "Force level Acquisition Plans for Pak Navy up to 2010", something available with the Indian agencies now, the Pakistan government has already ear-marked specific budget for the acquisition. These include at least 6-8 submarines, 10 Frigates, Fast Attack Craft (Missiles) - 8, Fast Attack Craft (Guns) - 8, survey ships - 3, Midgets - 4 and Auxiliary - 5. These procurements are slated to be made at an estimated cost of nearly 250 billion Pakistani rupees from 2002 to 2010.

Source(s): *Naval Open Source INTelligence*, Dec 04, 2008

<http://nosint.blogspot.com/2008/12/pakistan-now-has-much-enhanced-maritime.html>



Nhava Sheva Becomes India's First Security Certified Terminal

Global marine terminal operator DP World's Nhava Sheva International Container Terminal(NSICT) in India, has become the country's first to achieve ISO 28000:2007 certification in supply chain security management systems. With the certification announced on Dec 25, the terminal also known as DP World Nhava Sheva became the 15th among the giant operator's network of 48 terminals worldwide, to get the distinction.

The Certification, undertaken by independent Rotterdam-based Dutch auditing firm and Maritime Classification Society of excellence Det Norske Veritas(DNV), validates the NSICT's mechanisms and processes to address security vulnerabilities at strategic and operational levels, as well as its preparedness for preventive action plans. The Nava Sheva terminal, which boast of state-of-the art infrastructure and world class services, is already certified for ISO 9001, ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001 and ISO 27001 management systems.

The terminal, was granted the certification after a thorough security audit of the facility, focused principally on container security, physical access controls, personnel security, procedural security, security training and threat awareness, business partner requirements and IT Security. Its investment in the ISO security management system has been recognised by the US Customs Border Protection agency, which invited DP World to join its Customs Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT) programme

Source(s): The Economic Times, Dec 26, 2008.

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/News/News_By_Industry/Transportation/Shipping_Transport/Nhava_Sheva_becomes_indias_first_security_certified_terminal_/articleshow/3893691.cms

SHIPBUILDING

Sluggish Markets Hit Shipbuilding Firms' Fund-Raising Plans

Two of India's top shipbuilding companies, as well as a third that is constructing a new facility, may have to defer plans to raise money from the public to fund their projects due to sluggish market conditions. Local firms had outlined plans to invest close to Rs20,000 cr over the next three-five years. "Nobody wants to touch the IPO (initial public offering) market now. It is for everyone to see," said Bhavesh Gandhi, Vice-Chairman of Pipavav Shipyard Ltd, the country's newest shipbuilder that began constructing the first of a series of 26 ships worth Rs4,300 crore for French, Greek and Norwegian fleet owners early this year.

Larsen and Toubro Ltd (L&T), the country's biggest engineering firm, has scaled down its earlier plan of setting up a Rs3,000 crore mega shipyard at Kattupalli in Tamil Nadu on the country's eastern coast. The firm will now be investing only Rs1,800 crore to erect the yard with a capacity to build 12 ships in a year compared with 60 earlier. Cochin Shipyard had recently received approval from the Union government to set up a small shipbuilding division with an investment of Rs98 crore. The company had also floated plans to build a second dry dock to construct bigger ships. A dry dock is a narrow basin that can be flooded to allow a ship to be floated in, then drained to allow that ship to come to rest on a dry platform. Dry docks are used for the construction, maintenance and repair of ships and typically cost around Rs800-1,000 crore.

The country's shipbuilding capacity is projected to reach 4 million tonnes (mt) (cargo carrying capacity) by 2012 from the present 2.8mt and rise further to 19mt by 2017, aided mainly by cost competitiveness and availability of skilled and cheap labour, according to a recent industry-funded report prepared by KPMG Advisory Services Pvt. Ltd. At this stage, India will have a 7.5% share of the global market, up from less than 1% now, said the report, which was submitted to the government. Local firms had outlined plans to invest close to Rs20,000 crore over the next three-five years to build new facilities and tap the potential that prevailed till early this year when shipping and global trade were at their peak. But the global credit crunch, the deteriorating economies in the West and the downturn in global shipping have put the brakes on the ship acquisition plans of global fleet owners, forcing local shipbuilding firms to trim their plans.

Source(s): P. Manoj , Live Mint, Dec 03, 2008.:

<http://www.livemint.com/2008/11/30230611/Sluggish-markets-hit-shipbuild.html>

Shipbuilding to be Part of Canada's Economic Stimulus.

The Canadian Government is planning to hold a "shipbuilding summit" early in the new year. The Government wants to make shipbuilding programs part of its economic stimulus package. The catch is that the shipbuilding programs involved are not new and will be supported from funds already earmarked for the construction of navy supply ships, patrol boats and icebreakers. Earlier this year, Public Works, the federal government's tendering arm, halted a \$2.9 billion replacement process for

the navy's Joint Support Ship and also pulled the plug on a \$340 million proposal to build 12 coast guard inshore patrol vessel

Now Defense Minister Peter MacKay plans to convene a shipbuilding summit, involving National Defence, Industry Canada and Public Works and Government Services Canada. Apparently, the aim is to come up a continuous shipbuilding program that gets away from the boom and bust cycle while at the same time wringing concessions from yards and unions

Source(s): Dec 15, 2008.

<http://www.marinelog.com/DOCS/NEWSMVMVII/2008dec00150.html>

SHIPPING

50% Of Fishing Vessels on Western Coast Unregistered

Over 50 per cent of the fishing vessels operating near the major ports on the country's western coast are unregistered, posing a threat to India's maritime security. Most of these ports are compliant with the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) code, which prescribes the responsibilities of the government, shipping companies, shipboard personnel and port personnel to detect security threats and take preventative measures. The code was introduced by the government after the 9/11 attacks on the US.

Still, the menace of unregistered boats persists. "Unregistered fishing boats neither have any proper identification number nor do their crews have any identity card. If left unchecked, these vessels can be used for any kind of subversive activities in India," said a senior official at Mormugoa Port. All these vessels should be compulsorily registered with the port authorities, he added. In the fishing jetty at Mormugoa Port, there are nearly 250 fishing vessels, of which nearly 50 per cent are unregistered, according to a port official. Despite repeated request from the port authorities to relocate the fishing jetty from the port area, nothing has been done due to various political issues. "We have our own internal security arrangements and co-ordinate with various security agencies. However, still a lot has to be done to enhance the maritime security in India," a senior Kandla Port official added.

Porous borders along the International Maritime Boundary Line bordering Pakistan and lack of enough maritime security personnel have made ports located on the western coast further vulnerable to subversive activities. There are around 133 ports located along India's western coast, spread over five states and two Union Territories. According to Coast Guard sources, minor ports like Oka, Veraval and Porbandar located at the Saurashtra coast have the worst security in place. These ports handle commodities like oil, coal, pig iron, raw bauxite, wheat, sulphur, coke, LPG and fertilisers, among others. Adjacent to these ports in the Rann of Kutch, which is rich in marine species, over 200 vessels can be found fishing in the area on a daily basis. "Since this area is rich in marine species, sometimes even fishing vessels from the Pakistan side tend to cross our border. However, with our limited resources and personnel, it is not possible to check every vessel. So we do only a random check," said a Coast Guard official.

Source(s): Bijith R, Business Standard, Dec 02, 2008

<http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/50fishing-vesselswestern-coast-unregistered/00/36/341967/>

As the World Economy Sinks, So Does Global Shipping

There may be no better measure of the reach, depth and potential duration of the global economic slowdown than the fast-sinking fortunes of the shipping industry. From the historic docks of Rotterdam to China's booming trading hub of Ningbo, troubling symptoms abound. The Baltic Dry Index, which tracks the cost of shipping raw materials, has plummeted from an all-time high of 11,793 last May to below 800, a 22-year low. The daily rental rate for the largest bulk carriers plunged from \$234,000 last summer to less than \$3,000 in early December, a staggering 99% reduction. "The violence of the drop is more extreme than anything we've ever seen before," says Jeremy Penn, chief executive of the London-based Baltic Exchange. As global demand for Chinese toys, German cars and Japanese electronics have dived, container trade has been hit hard as well, with some 200 vessels now lying idle and many more likely to join them when their current contracts are complete.



Container traffic between Asia and Europe is shrinking for the first time on record, according to some estimates. Shipping a container from Hong Kong to Rotterdam now costs just a few hundred dollars, down from more than \$2,500 in late 2007.

Shipping companies have been hit by a double whammy: falling global demand and, even more importantly, paralysis in the financial markets. The latter is crucial because the letters of credit that international trade relies on have all but dried up. Khalid Hashim, managing director of Precious Shipping in Bangkok, says government banking bailouts have overlooked the shipping industry's needs. "Trade finance is not getting enough attention within the banking system," Hashim says. "Governments don't recognize the danger signals coming up. It will take time to resolve."

Even more worrying for the long-term outlook is the rush to cancel orders for new ships. Clarksons of London, the world's largest shipbroker, announced that new orders had dropped from 378 vessels in October 2007 to just 37 last October. In November, New York-based Genco Shipping and Trading wrote off a \$53 million deposit in order to get out of a \$530 million deal to buy six new vessels, freeing up liquidity and strengthening the firm's "ability to act opportunistically," a Genco spokesman said. As companies pull back to protect their bottom lines, many are simply taking ships out of service, says Kriton

Source(s): Jeff Israely, Time Magazine, Dec 31, 2008.

<http://www.time.com/time/business/article/0,8599,1864840,00.html?iid=tsmodule>



MARITIME COOPERATION

Pirates Menace: India for More International Cooperation

Amid a spate of incidents of hijacking of ships by Somali pirates, India has sought strengthening of international cooperation to enhance maritime security and ensure sustainable use of marine resources. Addressing the U.N. General Assembly, Minister of State for External Affairs E Ahamed expressed "serious concern" over increasing number of incidents of piracy and armed robberies particularly off the coast of Somalia and called for assisting the developing nations to enable them to participate in the maritime security. Ahamed, however, cautioned about the UN resolution for international cooperation that the authorisation, which had become necessary due to particular situations in Somalia, should not be considered as establishing customary international law. He also pointed out that law enforcement against armed robbers thus primarily falls within the domain of the coastal States concerned. "Therefore, enhancement of coastal States' capacity to combat such crimes is very important."

In addition, he stressed the need for increased bilateral, multilateral and regional cooperation to combat piracy and armed robbery by coastal states. But such cooperation must be based on respecting the coastal States' territorial integrity, sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction in accordance with international law, he added.

Source(s): The Hindu, Dec 05, 2008.

<http://www.hindu.com/thehindu/holnus/000200812051413.htm>



MARITIME SECURITY

Indian Maritime Forces Rebuff Criticism in Wake of Mumbai Attack

India's maritime forces were left to defend themselves in wake of criticism that they could have prevented the terror attack on Mumbai on 26 Nov, which left about 175 people dead. The Naval Chief acknowledged "public outrage" for perceived security lapses after 10 to 15 terrorists came ashore along the coast of the country's commercial capital.

Admiral Suresh Mehta acknowledged a "systemic failure" by the forces charged with protecting the coast, but said the Navy and Coast Guard received no specific intelligence they could act upon. "The information available should be actionable. It should have some specifics to it. Whatever actionable have come our way we have always taken action promptly," he said.

Admiral Mehta, who formerly commanded the India Coast Guard also says Indian vessels were patrolling the Arabian Sea off the state between Pakistan and Mumbai. "The coast guard had deployed a large number of units of the Gujarat coast. Naval ships are also operating off the Gujarat coast," he added. Maritime security experts contend that India has too few vessels and personnel to patrol the country's 7,500 kilometers of coastline and too many agencies operating on Indian waters, 23 in all, to allow effective coordination.

Source(s): Steve Herman, Voice of America, Dec 02, 2008.

<http://voanews.com/english/2008-12-02-voa16.cfm>

Navy, Coast Guard Start Patrolling High Seas

Navy and Coast Guard launched extensive patrolling of the high seas close to the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) with Pakistan in wake of the devastating multiple-terror strikes in Mumbai. Coming as this does in the backdrop of escalating tension with Pakistan, with Islamabad threatening to redeploy 100,000 more soldiers on its border with India after diverting them from the Afghan border, the Navy and Coast Guard were quick to dismiss any suggestion of "a mobilisation" of warships on the western seaboard.

"Our ships are there for surveillance and other checks, not for any offensive action. We have been instructed to search all suspicious ships before they enter Indian waters and ports. Moreover, we are keeping a close watch on our offshore assets, including Bombay High," said a senior officer. Sources said over 20 Navy and Coast Guard ships, including a couple of submarines, were spread out in the Arabian Sea, even as maritime reconnaissance aircraft and helicopters were patrolling the region from bases at Mumbai, Goa, Daman, Porbunder, Jakhau and Okha.

Rear Admiral R K Pattanaik, Western Naval Command, refused to comment on the deployment of warships along the IMBL, holding that "these things were not for public knowledge". He, however, confirmed that the Navy had intensified patrols all along the shores. Though the Indian armed forces are maintaining a high alert, mobilisation of forces on the lines of Operation Parakram in 2001-2002 -- which saw forward deployment of over 500,000 soldiers, tank regiments, fighter aircraft and warships after the terror attack on Parliament -- is not on the cards, as reported by TOI earlier.

Source(s): The Times of India, Dec 02, 2008,

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/Navy_Coast_Guard_start_patrolling_high_seas/articleshow/3781449.cms

UN Security Council Extends Anti-Piracy Measures Off Somali Coast

The U.N. Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution allowing member states to continue fighting pirates off the coast of Somalia for another year. The resolution also offers support for a European Union anti-piracy mission. The U.S.-drafted resolution authorized states to continue taking all necessary means to combat piracy - including the use of force. It also laid a legal foundation for a European Union naval operation, known as Atalanta, which was expected to begin in mid December. Under the European Union flag, France, Britain, Germany and Greece will send one warship each, and Spain would contribute airpower. The force will patrol near Somalia's pirate-infested waters and escort ships carrying commercial and humanitarian cargo.

"Piracy is killing. Every day more than three million Somali people are depending on food aid, on emergency relief - which are coming, 95 percent of them - by the sea. So by adopting resolution 1846, the international community is sending a very strong signal of its determination to deal with piracy," French Ambassador Jean-Maurice Ripert said. Council members said they still need to work out a mechanism for prosecuting suspected pirates once they arrest them. Council members stressed that the explosion of piracy off Somalia's coast is a symptom of the political conflict and lawlessness in that country, and that these root causes must be resolved to really stop piracy.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has asked the council to authorize an international stabilization force for Somalia, which would take over from the small African Union force on the ground, and eventually would be replaced by U.N. peacekeepers once the situation has stabilized.

Source(s): Margaret Besheer, Voice of America, Dec 02, 2008

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2008-12-02-voa59.cfm>

Complete Overhaul of Coastal Security Set Up Needed

The Mumbai terror carnage calls for a comprehensive revamp of the entire coastal security architecture, beginning from the very top with a national maritime commission (NMC), right down to making it mandatory for fishing trawlers to install transponders. The Navy has been crying hoarse for several years for a federal apex body like an NMC to handle maritime security issues in a holistic manner. But to no avail, with the politico-bureaucratic machinery not evincing much interest.

Now, it's time to get cracking on it. The single-window body, with probably a maritime security advisor to head it, would help the government take quick decisions and respond rapidly to maritime security challenges and threats. At present, different agencies handling sea-based activities such as the shipping ministry, the fisheries department under agriculture ministry, port authorities as well as Navy and Coast Guard under defence ministry often work at cross-purposes or get engaged in turf wars.

"We are pushing for a proper infrastructure to bring synergy among different agencies working in the maritime domain," admitted Navy chief Admiral Sureesh Mehta. Along with the NMC,

it's probably time to also look at the creation of maritime defence zones (MDZs), with Navy and Coast Guard working closely under one operational commander in each zone, to ensure security of ports, offshore assets and coastal waters from state as well as non-state actors.

"There could be, for instance, two to three MDZs each for the west and the east coast, apart from another one for the strategic Andaman and Nicobar Islands," said a senior official. As per norms, patrolling and surveillance from the shoreline to 12 nautical miles is the charter of the fledgling marine police, while Coast Guard functions between 12 and 200 nautical miles, and Navy is responsible for the waters beyond 200 nautical miles. There is, of course, overlap in all this, especially since the marine police forces of the nine coastal states and four Union Territories are quite primitive, both in terms of training and infrastructure, as of now.

The Centre, for instance, is yet to provide marine police forces with the 204 patrol boats approved for them under the home ministry's Coastal Security Scheme launched in March 2006. "This needs to be fast-tracked. Similarly, Coast Guard force-levels need to be boosted from the present 80 vessels and 45 aircraft to at least its minimum authorised strength of 106 vessels and 52 aircraft," said the official. Added a senior Navy officer, "Moreover, just over 1,000 marine police personnel have been trained by Coast Guard till now. It's very important for police jawans to get sea legs. Ex-Navy and Coast Guard personnel can certainly be hired by the state marine police forces." Along with trained manpower, there is need for the government to take the help of technology in terms of coastal radars, AIS (automatic identification system) transponders and the like.

Ideally, India should have a "gapless" radar network all along its porous 7,516-km coastline. But if there are funding constraints, a chain of radars can first be deployed in more threat-prone areas like the Maharashtra and Gujarat coasts to cover areas 20-25 km from the coast. Along with this, it must be made mandatory for fishing trawlers to install AIS transponders to provide "dynamic information" about their identification, location, speed and course. "Transponders will help us track the boats by radar," said Admiral Mehta. As of now, International Maritime Organisation regulations make transponders necessary for ships over 300 metric tonnes. "Though they are not very expensive, the government may have to subsidise transponders for trawlers. All boats, after all, cannot be physically boarded for checking," said another official.

Source(s): The Times of India, Dec 4, 2008.

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/Complete_overhaul_of_coastal_security_setup_needed/articleshow/3789428.cms

Indian Navy 'Captures 23 Pirates' Off Somalia Coast

Striking yet another blow at the very heart of piracy in the Gulf of Aden, Indian warship INS Mysore and its marine commandos thwarted a hijack attempt on an Ethiopian merchant vessel on Saturday and captured 23 pirates and a large arms cache in the operation. The arrest of the 23 pirates (12 Somali and 11 Yemeni) and the arms haul is the largest such seizure in the ongoing anti-piracy operations off Somalia. The confiscated arms and equipment included seven AK-47s, three other assault rifles, 13 loaded magazines, a rocket-propelled grenade launcher with two rockets, several grenades, a GPS set and a mobile phone.



Early November, the British Royal Navy captured eight pirates, who were subsequently handed over to Kenya to face trial in the port town of Mombasa. "The external affairs ministry is now working to find out to which country the 23 pirates in INS Mysore's custody can be handed over," said a senior officer. Pirates operating with sheer impunity from ports like Eyl and Hobyo in Somalia, torn apart by an 18-year-old civil war, have already attacked as many as 100 merchant vessels transiting through the crucial shipping lane this year. At least 17 of the hijacked ships and their crew are still being held captive by the pirates for ransom.

The dramatic action on the high seas on Saturday began at 11am IST when the 6,900-tonne Delhi-class missile destroyer INS Mysore received a "distress call" over the MMB Channel 16 from Ethiopian merchant vessel Gibe that it was being attacked by a pirate "mother dhow" and a speedboat around 150 nautical miles east of Aden. An armed Chetak helicopter, with four marine commandos, was immediately "launched" from INS Mysore towards Gibe, which was 13 nautical miles from the Indian warship at that point in time.

As INS Mysore reached the spot, all 23 pirates had clambered onto the 10-metre-long dhow - later identified as 'Salahaddin' -- in a bid to escape. INS Mysore then opened fire across the dhow's bows with its heavy-calibre machine guns, forcing the sea bandits to come to a complete halt. A detachment of heavily-armed marine commandos promptly sped across to the pirate dhow in their fibre-glass inflatable boats. "Seeing the Marcos, the pirates surrendered quite easily, even

though for some time they pretended to be plain fishermen. A search of the dhow led to the discovery of the large arms cache and three outboard motors," he said. Though over 20 warships from US, EU and other countries are patrolling the piracy-infested Gulf of Aden, which connects the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean, it's actually the Indian Navy which has taken the battle to the pirates.

On November 11, INS Tabar had repulsed two hijack attempts, one on an Indian ship (MV Jag Arnav) and the other on a Saudi oil carrier (NCC Tihama), one after the other. Then, on November 18, it had sunk Thai trawler "Ekawat Nava 5", which had been commandeered by pirates, after a gunbattle. Though the Navy had come in for some criticism for sinking the Thai trawler, Admiral Sureesh Mehta had declared that his force had done nothing wrong.

Indian External affairs minister Pranab Mukherjee, too, had strongly defended the Navy's anti-piracy action on the high seas. Meanwhile, US Defence Secretary Robert Gates said better intelligence was needed for a land attack on pirate bases to be considered.

Source(s): BBC, Dec 13, 2008.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7781436.stm>

Rajat Pandit, The Times of India, Dec 04, 2008.

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Navy_fights_pirates_off_Somali_coast_nabs_23/articleshow/3832886.cms

China Set to Launch Naval Mission in Gulf of Aden

In what would be the first active deployment of its warships beyond the Pacific, China appears set to send naval vessels to help in the fight against hijackers in the pirate-infested Gulf of Aden. A vice foreign minister and a leading naval strategist were quoted in Chinese state media on Wednesday(Dec 17) as saying that Beijing is close to mounting a naval mission in the gulf.

Li Jie, a military strategist and naval expert, told the state-run China Daily that cooperating with a multinational force operating against East African pirates would be a "very good opportunity" for the Chinese Navy. "Apart from fighting pirates," he said, "another key goal is to register the presence of the Chinese Navy.

On Dec 17 pirates had seized a Chinese fishing vessel off the coast of Yemen. The boat was believed to have a crew of about 30. At least two other ships have been hijacked this week: a French tugboat and a Turkish cargo ship. Traditionally concerned with coastal defense, the People's Liberation Army Navy has been undergoing a wide and rapid modernization program, especially in the bolstering of its submarine fleet. A long-range goal of the Chinese expansion has been the development of a blue-water navy capable of extended tours.

About 60 percent of China's imported oil comes from the Middle East, and the bulk of that passes through the gulf, along with huge shipments of raw materials out of Africa. Last month, two Chinese ships were hijacked there, a fishing trawler and a Hong Kong-flagged cargo ship carrying wheat. "I would think they would go to protect their own interests -- just for escorting purposes and not for policing," said Jane Chan, an associate research fellow in the Maritime Security Program at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. "I don't think they're talking about going on the offensive right now so far away." While China has been "quite wary of putting maritime assets in the region and wary of doing anything out in the open," Chinese diplomats have been active in anti-piracy efforts, according to Arthur Bowring, managing director of the Hong Kong Shipowners Association.

"The Chinese have been working diplomatically with the Yemeni government and coast guard, and their ambassador in Nairobi is very heavily involved," Mr. Bowring said. "They may not seem out in front, but they work extremely hard in the back seat." "China is usually quite conservative about playing with the big guys or saying they're going to match up with them," said Ms. Chan.

Source(s): International Herald Tribune, Dec 17, 2008

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/12/17/asia/18pirates.php>



MARINE TECHNOLOGY

Govt Plans Low Cost Satellite to Watch India's Coastline

In a response to recent maritime threats in the country, government of India is planning to strengthen its security at the vast coastline of over 7,500 kms. The Union Ministry of Shipping is planning to develop a low cost satellite which would monitor ships and vessels operating at the Indian waters. The ministry's department is in talks with Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to develop the satellite.

The ministry is also planning to create a new commando force exclusively for ports which would respond to any maritime threats, said A P V N Sarma, Secretary – Shipping. He added, that major concern at this juncture is fishing harbours, located near to the ports which often pose threat to

vessels entering into the ports. It was essential to separate them and he called for the state governments participation for shifting fishing activities beyond the port limit.

In his inaugural address at a workshop on 'Maritime Security – Issues and Challenges' organised by Director General of Shipping and Indian Port Associations at Chennai, Shekar Dutt, Deputy National Security Advisor said the government was looking at a new plan will coordinate with international and regional maritime initiatives and a plan for infrastructure development which would support a commercial security plan and link land – maritime concerns. This would encompass detection, detention, investigation and prosecution. There is a need to make a distinction between a legitimate and illegitimate presence at sea.

He added, we have to link inputs of Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT) System through satellite based identification with information that is closer to the coast. An Automatic Identification System (AIS) is essential. Dutt noted that the problem is posed by smaller vessels. A rough estimate, there are over 1.5 lakh mechanised fishing vessels and motorised vessels. The number of non-motorised vessels are likely to double this year.

Source(s): Business Standard, Dec 30, 2008.

<http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/govt-plans-low-cost-satellite-to-watch-indias-coastline/13/41/51979/on>

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