



# MAKING WAVES

## Fortnightly E-News Brief of National Maritime Foundation

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#### Editorial Team

*Captain (Dr.) Gurpreet S Khurana*

*Commander Kapil Narula*

*Ms. Asha Devi*

#### Address

*National Maritime Foundation*

*Varuna Complex, NH-8,*

*Airport Road*

*New Delhi-110 010, India*

*Email: [maritimeindia@gmail.com](mailto:maritimeindia@gmail.com)*

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## ASEAN Patrols in the South China Sea?

- Prashanth Parameswaran

A US official suggests ASEAN states undertake joint patrols in the South China Sea. Earlier this week, the commander of the U.S. Navy Seventh Fleet made headlines when he suggested that ASEAN countries could cooperate to form a maritime force to patrol areas of the South China Sea.

According to Bloomberg, Vice Admiral Robert Thomas said on Tuesday at the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition – held in Malaysia following the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting (which I covered for The Diplomat here) – that countries could streamline cooperation on maritime security while respecting sovereignty and coastal space, as was the case with counter-piracy efforts in the Gulf of Aden.

“Perhaps easier said than done, from both a policy and organization perspective, such an initiative could help crystallize the operational objectives in the training events that ASEAN navies want to pursue,” Thomas reportedly said at a panel session. “If ASEAN members were to take the lead in organizing something along those lines, trust me, the U.S. 7th Fleet would be ready to support,” he added.

Philippine Vice Admiral Jesus Millan subsequently said that the Philippine navy was amenable to Thomas’ suggestion. That is no surprise. The Philippines has been publicly protesting against Chinese “sovereignty patrols” around disputed features in the South China Sea over the past few years, and its ally the United States has already been increasingly helping Manila conduct patrols to help monitor activities in its waters.

Yet as Millan himself pointed out, this is a “resource intensive initiative” and it would take all countries concerned working together to get off the ground. These ASEAN

states deal with the South China Sea issue quite differently and the idea itself may seem too controversial for some for fear of angering Beijing. The Chinese foreign ministry has already predictably responded to Thomas' proposal by saying that it hopes countries in the region will cooperate with China while countries outside the region will "maintain a neutral position, particularly on the issue of sovereignty."

How exactly might these patrols work in practice? Millan mentioned that the concept was not far from the Malacca Strait Patrols (MSP) undertaken by Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand. The MSP, which began in 2004, is a set of cooperative measures, which include air and sea patrols between these countries to tackle piracy. However, putting this cooperative structure in place will not be easy.

As Millan noted, such a program would need to be governed by some sort of collaborative mechanism or standard operating procedure. There are also lingering questions about how the various countries can work together when it comes to effectively sharing equipment and intelligence. Contending claims in the South China Sea may also make patrolling some areas a rather turbulent affair.

Source: [Diplomat](#), 19 Mar 2015

### **The Battle for Indian Ocean**

- Rajeev Sharma

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's just-concluded bilateral visit to Sri Lanka (March 13-14) was laden with strategic agenda. While there was heavy bilateral agenda too given the fact that this was the first trip to Sri Lanka by an Indian premier in 28 years, the visit had two major objectives in the multilateral context: China's steady forays into the Indian Ocean and consultations with top Sri Lankan leadership over the situation in Maldives.

Modi's foremost strategic agenda was to bolster India's soft power in the Indian Ocean region and counter the Chinese rapid chess moves. Well, the Indians may not be aggressively pushing the "Indian Ocean is India's Ocean" line for now but certainly, New Delhi is trying to tell the Indian Ocean Rim (IOR) states that the water body does not belong to China.

Geographically speaking, China is not an Indian Ocean power. Yet it is trying to project itself as one, even as Beijing goes about the task of strengthening its iron grip over the South China Sea and East China Sea and creating new reefs and islands in these international waters.

Modi's visit incidentally was the final leg of his three-nation tour of Indian Ocean island nations, Seychelles and Mauritius being his earlier stops. Modi's just-concluded three-nation tour must be seen in the larger context of India's Ocean diplomacy.

Actually, India's Ocean diplomacy kicked off from the land-locked New Delhi when the newly elected Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena visited India last month. Incidentally, Sirisena chose India as the first destination of his foreign visit, thus sending a not-so-subtle message to all other major powers, particularly China. Modi immediately built up further on Sirisena's India trip and visited Sri Lanka within a month of Sirisena's India tour.

The reason behind this unusual bit of diplomacy is centered on China's super ambitious Maritime Silk Route (MSR) project. The \$40 billion MSR project is being viewed by many foreign powers, big or small, as a clever bit of checkbook diplomacy. China claims that over 50 nations in the Asia Pacific region have lent support to its MSR project. Many of the states in Asia Pacific are small economies like Maldives, which has an annual GDP of just \$2.2 billion.

India has already given a tepid and cautious response to China's MSR project. External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj had gone on record as saying from the Chinese soil last month that India could not give a blanket endorsement to the MSR project. Incidentally, Sri Lanka is an important lynchpin in the Chinese strategic

maneuvers in Indian Ocean. Just last year when Mahinda Rajapaksa was the president of Sri Lanka, Chinese nuclear submarines and warships had docked in Sri Lankan harbors, triggering concern in India. The Sirisena government has assured India that it would ensure that this won't be repeated.

The second major point in Modi's Sri Lanka visit from the multilateral perspective was the volatile political situation in Maldives. India has serious concerns over the situation in Maldives following the arrest of former President Mohamed Nasheed on Feb. 22 on terror charges and his 13-year sentence on March 13. India has immense geopolitical stakes in Maldives, a country, which does not happen to be on major western powers' radar screens. The US and the EU do not maintain embassies in Male, the capital of Maldives. Instead, their envoys in Colombo are additionally accredited to Maldives.

With regime change following presidential elections in January this year in Sri Lanka, India has a more favorable government in Colombo with Sirisena at the helm. As stated before, Sri Lanka enjoys lot of advantage over Maldives. One of the strategic objectives of Modi during his talks with Sri Lankan leadership in Colombo on March 13 was to understand the Maldivian conundrum from the Sri Lankan perspective. Ahmed Naseem, who was Maldives' foreign minister during Nasheed's presidency and is now in a self-imposed exile in Sri Lanka, told this writer that he was told by his Sri Lankan sources that Maldives figured prominently in the Modi-Sirisena talks.

But why Maldives alone as the same Indian dilemma is applicable to the entire Indian Ocean region! In contrast, China has no such inhibitions. That is why while India is seen largely as twiddling its thumbs, the Chinese juggernaut continues to race ahead in the Indian Ocean chess games.

Source: [Arab News](#), 19 Mar 2015

## **America's Neo-Isolationism and the Pacific Century**

- Peter Morici

In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, isolationism proved costly—protectionism exacerbated the Great Depression and strategic disengagement pulled America into an even bloodier Second World War. Now, neo-isolationism may prove America's last reasonable choice. Western values national self-determination, basic human rights, and free markets, supplemented by a compassionate state are under attack by the rise of China, Russian aggression, and ISIS and al Qaeda.

The resources required to defeat these are so huge that the United States must be better supported by allies, or it will be forced to engage in foreign policy triage.

China, through trade and aid, offers emerging economies in Asia and elsewhere an alternative to western norms founded on an oligarchy, limits on individual freedoms, and state-directed capitalism.

The U.S. Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) initiative is about countering Chinese influence with access to American markets and technology—but it only enjoys cynical support from allies in Europe. Britain, France, Germany, and Italy have agreed to participate in China's Asian Development Bank, which will offer poorer nations an alternative to World Bank financing without prescriptions for political and economic reform. The Europeans want a cut of the business with China, even if that means subverting western institutions.

Regarding Russia in the Ukraine, Germany is not willing to bear the commercial costs of imposing the broader sanctions that could cripple the aggressor's supporting economy, and it is not willing to commit its military to defend Eastern Europe.

Without support from Europe's richest country, confronting Vladimir Putin's designs would be daunting for any American president. Muslim extremism cannot be stopped by defeating ISIS's army in Syria and Iraq, but terrorism cannot be contained without destroying that army. The growing economic resources of ISIS make possible the

colonization of Libya and support the spread of violent extremism now embraced in some form by about 48 million Muslims worldwide.

Defeating radical Islam also requires moderate Muslim states to lead by rejecting the imposition of Muslim values through constitutions, laws, and violence, and to fight ISIS if they expect Americans to do the same. Yet, Saudi Arabia sends a clear message of support to extremists by banning churches and synagogues and countenancing beheadings. Egypt, with a large and modern military, refuses to put boots on the ground to defeat ISIS in Iraq—President Sisi says that’s an American responsibility.

In Europe, Italy is faced with an emerging terrorist state in Libya, which has declared its goal to turn St. Peter’s Basilica into a mosque. Rome says it is willing to participate in an international force—translation, let us ask the Americans to defend our ancient culture.

Certainly, President Obama gives allies good reasons to view America as unreliable by failing to adequately dispatch the U.S. navy to help defend Japan, the Philippines, and Vietnam when China encroaches on their territorial claims, failing to even adequately arm the Ukrainians, and musing Christians did terrible things during the Crusades. He seems bent on compromising U.S. interests in trade talks such as in the TPP, efforts to address climate change, and negotiations with Iran.

The next president—be it Hillary Clinton or her GOP opponent—will likely have a more realistic view of U.S. interests and responsibilities, but America cannot save Europe from its own decadence or the Muslim Middle East from its own immorality with its treasure and lives of its warriors. By default, America is left to defend Israel, where immediate peril requires more realism in assessing threats and moral fiber than most Europeans, Saudis, and others seem able to muster.

The new isolationism will not be absolute. Cooperation with Europe will continue, but America’s future really lies in Asia—where its friends would resist Chinese hegemonic designs if America exhibited the kind of courage and resolve that seems

foreign to President Obama. Asia and the Pacific are the real prizes, and that's where America's future lies.

Source: [Breitbart](#), 23 Mar 2015

### **Indian Govt Yet to Decide on Purchase of Japanese Amphibious Craft**

- Huma Siddiqui

Even as defence minister Manohar Parrikar is heading on his first foreign trip later this month to Japan, followed by South Korea, the government has informed the Lok Sabha that no decision has been taken yet on the purchase of Japanese long-range 12 US-2i aircraft for the Navy for around \$1.65 billion.

As part of India's effort to step up its defence diplomacy, Parrikar will undertake a two-day trip starting from March 30 to Tokyo, the first foreign visit by an Indian defence minister since November 2013. Though the thrust of Parrikar's visit will be increasing defence cooperation and pushing the government's 'Make in India' initiative in Tokyo, the two sides will be discussing the ShinMaywa US-2i amphibious aircraft and will also try to iron out any issues related to its purchase.

The defence minister's choice of Japan for his first international visit is of strategic importance, especially as China, Japan's neighbour, has been disturbed by increasing Indo-Japanese ties besides increasing American interest in the region. The last Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) meeting on February 28, had deferred discussions on the US-2i, even though it was on the agenda, disclosed sources. "The defence minister had sought additional information on the deal and hence, a final decision was not taken. So, the defence ministry has asked for more details from the vendor ShinMaywa Industries Limited as well as the government of Japan"

The Indian government has been keen on acquiring the ShinMaywa US-2i amphibious aircraft from Japan as part of their expanding bilateral strategic

partnership, with both nations wary of China's assertive behavior in the Asia-Pacific region. However, there is no concept of foreign military sales in Japan, hence the DAC has to give an approval before it moves forward.

Sources have said that the deal is part of cooperation between the two countries and conforms to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Make in India' initiative. It is understood that both sides agree all critical issues including the transfer of technology, re-export to a third country, and terms of use on. Also, the deal that has an approval of the department of industrial policy and promotion is awaiting for a Acceptance of Necessity (AON) from the Indian Navy.

While the Army, Navy and the Coast Guard are supporting the requirement of these planes, "It will be like an AON that the Navy requires 12 US-2i as of now, and the commercial negotiations for them can begin. The Coast Guard, in turn, may require five such planes," explained a defence ministry source.

It may be recalled that when Modi visited Japan last September for talks with his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe, the two directed the JWG to "accelerate progress in the discussions and preparations for a roadmap for the development of the Indian aircraft industry through the US-2i aircraft cooperation".

The US-2i is quite a unique aircraft, capable as it is of short take-offs from land as well as water with a range of over 4,500 km. Powered by four big turbo-props, it can land even on rough seas amid three-metre high waves.

Though the plane is mainly designed for air-sea search and rescue operations, it can also rapidly transport 30 combat-ready soldiers to "hot zones" in an emergency. "The aircraft will give a huge boost to our operational logistics in areas like the far-flung but strategically critical Andaman and Nicobar Islands. It can also land spares and equipment in close proximity to warships on the high seas," said an official.

In South Korea, Parrikar would discuss with the South Korean shipbuilder 'Kangnam' about the Mine Counter Measure Vessels (MCMVs) for the Indian Navy. Last month

the DAC nominated Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) as the production agency for 12 MCMVs for the Indian Navy at a likely cost of Rs 30,000 crore.

Last November, 'Buy and Make (Global)' tender for eight MCMVs was scrapped following revelations of engagement of a middleman by Kangnam, which was declared the lowest bidder. The cancelled tender of 2005 involved building two MCMVs in South Korea and the remaining six at GSL under transfer of technology.

Source: [Financial Express](#), 23 Mar 2015

### **Japan and Indonesia: A New Maritime Forum?**

- Prashanth Parameswaran

The two countries are looking to establish a new high-level bilateral maritime forum. On March 23, visiting Indonesian President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo and his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe agreed to set up a new high-level bilateral maritime forum. The initiative is part of their ongoing efforts to strengthen their overall strategic partnership as well as to deepen the defense side of that relationship, as I have noted previously.

While the joint statement signed by Jokowi and Abe to strengthen their strategic partnership, seen by The Diplomat, consisted of five areas, the first was dedicated specifically to maritime cooperation. The statement notes that both Jokowi and Abe, as leaders of maritime countries, confirm, "Free, open and stable seas are essential for peace, stability and prosperity of the region and the international community." The two countries will establish a Japan-Indonesia Maritime Forum to help realize this goal.

"They concurred in establishing Japan-Indonesia Maritime Forum as soon as possible in order to further strengthen and accelerate maritime cooperation inter alia in maritime safety and security, promotion of maritime industries, as one of the

important pillars towards enhancing bilateral cooperative relationship,” the statement read.

Speaking after the summit, Jokowi said that the forum would be geared towards enhancing Indonesia’s coast guard and infrastructure capabilities. “Japan and Indonesia agree to launch the forum in order to enhance competence of coast guard capabilities and infrastructure, as well as the marine industry,” Jokowi said.

Details about the forum, however, are still lacking. According to Kyodo News, a senior Japanese government official admitted that both sides have not agreed about specifics such as when the first session would be held and who will take part. The official did, however, say that it was to take place at a high level.

The setting up of the forum comes as Indonesia seeks to realize its new maritime doctrine – dubbed the poros maritime dunia, translated as global maritime fulcrum (which I have explored in several pieces, including here and here) – and Japan continues to strengthen its relationships with Southeast Asian countries, including increasingly in the security sphere.

Aside from agreeing to set up the forum, the maritime cooperation portion of the joint statement noted that both sides would promote cooperation by strengthening capacity-building for maritime safety, promoting the fishing, shipbuilding and shipping industries, and enhancing measures for maritime traffic safety “through technical cooperation including the dispatch of experts, the provision of equipment and financial assistance.” Some of this cooperation will build upon previous efforts, including Tokyo’s maritime security assistance to Southeast Asian states and discussions about the provision of patrol boats.

Given both countries’ involvement in the ongoing South China Sea and East China Sea disputes – even though Indonesia is technically not a claimant state – the joint statement did include a reference to “the importance of freedom of navigation and over flight on the high seas, unimpeded lawful commerce, as well as resolving maritime disputes by peaceful means,” which would be done in accordance with

international law including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Source: [Diplomat](#), 24 Mar 2015

### **China Invokes 'Cabbage Tactics' in South China Sea**

- Huseyin Erdogan

China is following a long-term strategy with its so-called "Cabbage Tactic" to increase its power in the South China Sea, said an expert from China's Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, on Tuesday.

"At a strategic level China is expanding its territorial control over the South China sea and also securing the trade routes that are vital to its continuous economic development," Ahmet Goncu, an associate professor at China's Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, told The Anadolu Agency AA via email. He added "to achieve its strategic goals, China is following very clever tactics that are difficult to counter."

The South China Sea is a critical world trade route and a potential source of hydrocarbons, particularly natural gas, with competing claims of ownership over the sea and its resources, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, EIA.

The EIA estimates the South China Sea contains approximately 11 billion barrels of oil and 5.7 trillion cubic meters of natural gas in proved and probable reserves. Conventional hydrocarbons mostly reside in undisputed territory.

Goncu further said the "Cabbage Tactic" the Chinese navy follows. "Whenever there is a conflicted small island, the Chinese military and paramilitary forces are sent to overwhelm the islands and lay siege to the surrounding islands with military ships, fishing boats along with other kinds of paramilitary vessels." Goncu explains the tactic as being just like a cabbage, where the islands are wrapped with layers of Chinese vessels which block the entry or exit of another country's navies.

The previous example of this tactical maneuver was observed in April 2012 in the dispute with the Philippines over Scarborough Reef in the South China Sea. Philippines landed several coast guard forces on an island. The forces eventually retreated since the reef was overwhelmed and surrounded by Chinese navy and paramilitary vessels. In October 2013, a similar sequence of events occurred over the Ayungin Island in the Spratlys, which resulted in the uneven confrontation of a massive number of Chinese vessels versus the Filipino coastal guard.

In February, China National Offshore Oil Corporation announced the discovery of natural gas field in the South China Sea with 100 billion cubic meters of reserves. Leaders gather to discuss the issue Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Prime Minister of Vietnam Nguyen Tan Dung covered a wide range of high priority issues, including the South China Sea and their shared commitment to strengthening the strategic and security mandate of the East Asia Summit, according to a statement released by the Australian Prime Ministry office on Wednesday March 18 in Canberra.

The two prime ministers called on all parties to fully implement the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, DOC, to exercise restraint and refrain from actions that could increase tensions in the region. These included the use of coercion or force to unilaterally alter the status quo. In the end, the PMs agreed on the urgent need to progress a code of conduct for the South China Sea, the statement said.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo paid a visit to Tokyo on Monday, and said that China's claims on the South China Sea dispute have no legal foundation. Some of the other countries around the South China Sea littoral area are becoming increasingly anxious about China's intentions and are seeking to improve security ties with other nations. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Widodo agreed to pursue broad cooperation in safeguarding and realizing the economic potential of Asia's seas, according to Japanese Nikkei.

Earlier this month, defense ministers from Malaysia and the Philippines met in Manila and agreed that their deputy defense ministers would consult on a regular basis. The meeting was noteworthy, as Malaysia, which claims several islands in the south Spratlys, usually prefers a softer approach.

"In general China is following a 'salami-slicing' tactic in the South China sea," said Goncu. "This tactic means you focus on a long-term strategy but with each move, only a small piece and increase of territory is gained in a way that invokes the smallest reaction possible from opponents," Goncu explained.

He gave an example of the tactics that were used by the Chinese navy in the area which he said were based on slow expansion of territory and the construction of various military bases in the small islands on the pretext of allowing for better logistics and monitoring.

"It is clear that other navies have something to learn from the tactics used by the Chinese navy in the South China Sea. Even though the U.S. is also increasing its presence in the area, they are not expanding their presence as much as the Chinese, and thus their strategy in the South China Sea is likely to be insufficient to stop the expansion of China," said Goncu.

"While the U.S. has to spread its forces globally, China is in a better position to put its full strength in its own backyard to overwhelm any other force in the region," he added.

China is also trying to give the U.S. the impression that involvement in this power struggle in the South China Sea implies high costs militarily and economically. "During the Obama administration, the U.S. already declared that it was increasing the number of its air and naval forces in the Asia-Pacific region," he noted. He said that the U.S. is continuing talks with Vietnam, Philippines, Japan and Australia in its effort to counterweight the rising military might of China.

According to Goncu, the power struggle is not going to be an easy one for both sides, and indeed it will imply increasing power struggle around the globe involving different frontiers. With its close relations with Russia and Iran, China has the ability to keep the U.S. busy in different areas of the world and thus the U.S. might not be able to reflect its full power in the Asia-Pacific.

Although China is improving its territorial control over the South China sea, exploration and drilling of oil reserves in the disputed waters has the potential to cause military clashes with Vietnam and/or Philippines, which might put the U.S. in a difficult position.

Source: [Anadolu Agency](#), 25 Mar 2015

### **India Unveils New Coastal Surveillance Radar Network**

- Ankit Panda

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tour across the Indian Ocean this month was long overdue. Despite its name, the Indian Ocean has not firmly been under India's custodianship, despite New Delhi's status as the most capable sea-faring state in the region. During his trip, Modi visited Sri Lanka, Seychelles, and Mauritius — Maldives was struck from his original itinerary after the government there jailed an opposition leader — and addressed defense and security cooperation in each capital.

In concrete terms, Modi's visit highlighted India's continuing interest in deploying and maintaining a network of coastal surveillance radars across the region, leading to heightened intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities and maritime domain awareness for the Indian Navy and Coast Guard.

The high point for India's planned CSR network came during Modi's one-day visit to Seychelles, where he publicly launched (and posed with) the first of a planned 32

CSR stations in the Indian Ocean. On March 11, Modi tweeted that he had “Unveiled the Plaque and Operationalization of Radar for the CSRS India-Seychelles Cooperation Project,” with an accompanying picture of him attentively operating a radar monitor. The public nature of the CSR deployment highlights India’s eagerness to signal its enduring security interest in the Indian Ocean.

The radar deployment in Seychelles comes as China heightens its naval operations in the eastern Indian Ocean. Last year, Indian strategists grew particularly concerned with a Chinese submarine was spotted docking at a port in Colombo, Sri Lanka. China has additionally announced its intention to invest in port facilities in and around the Indian Ocean.

Modi told senior Indian Navy and Seychelles Coast Guard officers during his visit that India would work to set up radar stations across the region, including in Mauritius and Maldives. “We regard Seychelles as a vital partner in our Indian Ocean neighborhood. Our relationship is unique and special. It is founded on a deep sense of mutual trust and confidence. Our security partnership is strong and has enabled us to fulfill our shared responsibility to advance maritime security in the region,” he said. Modi added that he hoped that “Seychelles will soon be a full partner in the maritime security cooperation between India, Maldives, and Sri Lanka.”

India regularly provides arms and training for the Seychelles Peoples’ Defense Forces. Similarly, Mauritius and Maldives have also felt the benefits of close security cooperation with India. During Modi’s visit to Port Louis, he oversaw the launch of the MCGS *Barracuda*, the first India-manufactured warship built for export. Before the current era of sour relations between New Delhi and Male, India and Maldives regularly conducted joint military exercises and cooperated on maritime security issues.

The CSR network shouldn’t primarily be read as an Indian project borne of anxiety about China’s forays into the Indian Ocean. With sea-based terror and piracy on the rise in the Indian Ocean, it is not surprising that India would be eager to bolster its maritime ISR capabilities. In fact, the original purpose of the CSR initiative is to allow

the Indian Navy and Coast Guard heightened maritime domain awareness to prevent incidents like the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks. Pakistan-based terrorists exploited Indian authorities' poor coastal awareness and control to infiltrate the Maharashtra coast. Additionally, as recent controversy highlighted, Indian perceptions of coastal terror threats continue to endure. Beyond terrorism, Indian Defense Minister Manohar Parrikar noted last week that, according to Indian estimates, pirates based off the coast of Somalia were shifting their operations into Indian Ocean sea lanes, approaching the Indian Coast.

An India-backed CSR network will help New Delhi ensure that the Indian Ocean is not a misnomer and allow India to protect its national security interests. Modi's trip added momentum to an emerging network of maritime security cooperation between New Delhi, Colombo, Victoria, and Port Louis (with Male's eventual inclusion if and when the current political crisis is resolved to New Delhi's satisfaction). If India continues to play its cards right, it could seal its position as the most significant net provider of security in the waters of the Indian Ocean between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. CSRs are just a small part of this endeavor.

Source: [Diplomat](#), 26 Mar 2015



### **Jiaolong Submersible Concludes Indian Ocean Expedition**

China's deep-sea manned submersible Jiaolong has concluded a 120-day expedition in the southwest Indian Ocean, Yu Hongjun, mission commander, said Monday. During the mission, the sub observed different hydrothermal areas, the characteristics of hydrothermal fluids and deep-sea biodiversity, gathering a huge amount of data and samples.

Jiaolong discovered new hydrothermal vents; deep-sea fissures emitting hot water. The finds could help research on the resources and environments of seafloor sulfide deposits that contain various metals. The voyage also saw six trainee pilots, selected out of 130 candidates, complete their training "outstandingly," Yu said. Jiaolong will embark on a new expedition to the northwest Pacific between June and August, followed by a journey to the Mariana Trench, where the sub had reached a depth of 7,062 meters in June 2012, its deepest dive to date.

Source: [Want China Times](#), 17 Mar 2015

### **Indo-France Naval Exercise 'Varuna' to Begin Next Month**

India and France will hold a 10 day naval exercise 'Varuna' next month that will see the French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle with naval version of Rafale aircraft in action. The exercise to be held in the Western coast will begin on April 23 and continue till May 3. Defence sources said the French will also bring in two destroyers and one support ship, part of the Charles de Gaulle task force.

India will also deploy its aircraft carrier INS Vikrant along with other ships and aircraft

Source: [Niti Central](#), 18 Mar 2015

## **India, US Have Mutual Desire for Naval, Maritime Ties**

With the convergence of strategic interest in the Indian Ocean there is a mutual desire for a deeper naval and maritime co-operation between India and the US, top Pentagon commanders have said.

"The convergence of strategic maritime interests in the Indian Ocean region to include the security of critical energy and trade routes, the denial of free passage to terrorists and weapons proliferators, and the need for effective responses to natural disasters have led to a greater mutual desire for deeper naval and maritime cooperation between India and the US," Navy Rear Adm Kevin M Donegan, acting deputy chief of Naval Operations for Operations, Plans and Strategy, said. Appearing before the Senate Armed Committee, Donegan along with other naval leadership in a joint testimony said that the relationship with India is among the top 21st century priorities for the US.

The Department of Defence emphasised India's role in the Asia Pacific rebalance in its 2012 strategic defence guidance document titled 'Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defence', which states that "the US' economic and security interests are inextricably linked to developments in the arc extending from the Western Pacific and East Asia to the Indian Ocean region and South Asia".

"...The US is also investing in a long-term strategic partnership with India to support its ability to be a regional economic anchor and provider of security in the broader Indian Ocean," it said. "But he said without any doubt China is building a modern and regionally powerful Navy with a modest but growing capability for conducting operations beyond China's near-seas region."

This creates both opportunities and challenges for the Navy. "The issue at stake is the fundamental question of whether China will use its growing economic and military power to assert its interests without respect to international norms," he said. Despite mounting concerns, the US seeks a positive, cooperative, and

comprehensive relationship with China that welcomes China's ability to take on a responsible leadership role, he said.

"The Navy and Marine Corps' overall military concept is a balance of deterrence and encouragement, inviting the Chinese Navy to play a responsible and constructive role in promoting security and peaceful development and join in coalition operations, as it has in countering piracy in the Indian Ocean," he added. He said the combination of the Asia-Pacific's economic importance to the world economy, its proximity to US security interests, and its expansive geography require an increased US naval presence to maintain our commitment to the stability of the region.

"Evolving challenges in the region including the activities of China's more modern Navy and the proliferation of anti-access/area denial require that the Navy and Marine Corps maintain a coordinated, leading role in the region," he added.

Source: [Zee News](#), 19 Mar 2015

### **JMSDF Leadership Visits USS Fort Worth (LCS 3)**

Japan Maritime Self Defence Force (JMSDF) leadership visited the Littoral Combat Ship USS Fort Worth (LCS 3) on March 20. Vice Adm. Tokuhiro Ikeda, commandant, Sasebo District; Rear Adm. Hidetoshi Fuchinoue, chief of staff, Sasebo District; Rear Adm. Hidetoshi Iwasaki, commander, Escort Flotilla 2; and JMSDF officers toured the ship while it was in port Sasebo conducting routine maintenance.

"We've heard a lot about Fort Worth and the LCS so this was a great opportunity to see what the ship has to offer," said Ikeda. "We look forward to working with future LCSs at-sea as more of these ships deploy to the U.S. 7th Fleet."

While aboard, JMSDF leadership toured Fort Worth's bridge and mission control center as well as her airborne and waterborne mission zones. During the tour, the officers learned how the ship's modularity allows it to be reconfigured for a number of

missions including surface warfare, mine warfare and anti-submarine warfare. The potential of LCS modularity was also demonstrated by embarking U.S. Navy divers during the recent AirAsia search and by embarking U.S. Marines for a portion of the annual U.S.-Republic of Korea Foal Eagle exercise.

"In the U.S. Navy, we believe that we are stronger when we engage our allies and partners during exercises, exchanges and port visits like this one," said Cmdr. Matt Kawas, Fort Worth Crew 103 commanding officer. "It's likely members of my crew will return to the Indo-Asia-Pacific in the future and so these ship tours allow us to develop relationships that will last throughout our careers, and possibly even beyond."

Following USS Freedom's (LCS 1) 2013 deployment, Fort Worth is the second LCS to deploy to 7th Fleet as part of an initiative to simultaneously deploy up to four LCS in the Asia-Pacific region by the end of the decade. The third and fourth LCS deployments are expected in 2016.

Working primarily out of Singapore as a maintenance and logistics hub, this is the first time an LCS has operated in Northeast Asia. Prior to arriving in Japan, Fort Worth participated in the U.S.-Republic of Korea annual exercise Foal Eagle.

Following the Sasebo port visit and a brief routine underway period off the coast of Japan, Fort Worth will begin her return transit to Southeast Asia, where she will begin exchanges with regional navies such as the International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference (IMDEX) 2015 in Singapore before turning over to the next crew in late May.

Throughout the summer and fall, Fort Worth will take part in most of the 2015 Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) exercise series. In its 21st year, CARAT is an annual, bilateral exercise series with the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps and the armed forces of nine partner nations including, Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Republic of Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Timor-Leste.

Fast, agile and mission-focused, littoral combat ships are designed to operate in near-shore environments and employ modular mission packages that can be configured for surface warfare, mine countermeasures or anti-submarine warfare. Fort Worth will employ the surface warfare (SUW) mission package for her entire deployment, augmenting her 57 mm gun and rolling airframe missile launcher with two 30 mm guns, two 11-meter rigid-hull inflatable boats, and two six-member maritime security boarding teams.

Enhancing the SUW mission package is the embarked aviation detachment from Helicopter Maritime Squadron (HSM) 35, the Navy's first composite expeditionary helicopter squadron, which consists of one MH-60R Seahawk helicopter and one MQ-8B Fire Scout unmanned aircraft system. The Fire Scout complements the MH-60R by extending the HSM - 35's range and endurance, enhancing maritime domain awareness.

The U.S. 7th Fleet conducts forward-deployed naval operations in support of U.S. national interests in the Indo-Asia-Pacific area of operations. As the Navy's largest numbered fleet, seventh Fleet interacts with 35 other maritime nations to build partnerships that foster maritime security, promote stability and prevent conflict.

Source: [America's Navy](#), 22 Mar 2015

### **Indonesia, Japan to Launch High-Level Forum on Maritime Security**

Japan and Indonesia agreed Monday to launch a high-level bilateral “maritime forum” to expand cooperation in ensuring security at sea and to increase Japan’s assistance in building Indonesia’s port infrastructure and coast guard capabilities.

In a summit in Tokyo, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Indonesian President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo welcomed the signing of a defense cooperation pact that involve Japanese capacity building assistance for Indonesian forces, as

well as bilateral cooperation in peacekeeping missions and defense equipment development.

Abe and Jokowi, who is on his first visit to Japan since becoming president last October, also agreed to set up a bilateral initiative to promote trade and investment, with Tokyo offering ¥140 billion in low-interest loans for the construction of a mass rapid transit system in Jakarta.

The leaders pledged to arrange talks in the near future between their defense and foreign ministers in line with an agreement struck between Abe and Jokowi's predecessor, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, in December 2013 to launch so-called two-plus-two security talks. The two countries have yet to hold such talks.

"We affirmed to further strengthen our strategic partnership as Asia's leading oceanic and democratic states," Abe said at a joint news conference with Jokowi. "We've produced major results at this summit, such as the launch of the high-level maritime forum to achieve an open and stable ocean and the start of 'Promosi,' the new trade and investment promotion initiative," he said.

Jokowi also hailed the maritime forum and Promosi, saying, "Japan and Indonesia agreed to launch the forum in order to enhance competence of coast guard capabilities and infrastructure, as well as the marine industry."

The president called for increased investment from Japanese companies. "Indonesia welcomes investment in such fields as the construction of power plants, port facilities, road building and maintenance, and highway infrastructure, as well as investment in special economic zones," he said. The two sides, however, have yet to agree on details about the maritime forum such as when the first session will be held and who will take part, except that it will be at a high level, according to a senior Japanese government official. The agreement on the maritime forum comes as Indonesia aims to serve as a fulcrum between the Pacific and Indian oceans under Jokowi's maritime axis doctrine, which attaches priority to developing maritime

infrastructure, building deepwater ports and logistical networks, as well as developing the shipping industry and tourism.

The doctrine also calls for eliminating the sources of conflict at sea such as piracy and violations of sovereignty, in an apparent reference to China's muscle-flexing to press its claim to most of the South China Sea.

In an effort to ensure regional peace and stability, Abe and Jokowi called on China and ASEAN to speed up consultations toward the early conclusion of a legally binding code of conduct aimed at reducing territorial and maritime conflicts in the South China Sea. The leaders urged Beijing and states engaged in territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea, such as the Philippines and Vietnam, to exercise restraint and settle issues based on international law.

Jokowi invited Abe to attend the 60th commemoration of the Asian-African Conference slated for April in Indonesia. Abe expressed willingness to attend if his schedule permitted, according to a senior Japanese government official. Abe said he was "very pleased" that Jokowi chose Japan as his first foreign travel destination outside ASEAN solely for a bilateral summit since he became president. After a four-day state visit to Japan through Wednesday, Jokowi will travel to China and hold talks with President Xi Jinping, according to the Indonesian Foreign Ministry.

Source: [Jakarta Post](#), 24 Mar 2015

### **Three Immediate Support Vessels Commissioned at Visakhapatnam**

the second batch of three Immediate Support Vessels (ISVs), comprising T-38, T-39 and T-40 were commissioned today, 24 March 2015 by Vice Admiral Satish Soni, PVSM, AVSM, NM, ADC, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief Eastern Naval Command at an impressive ceremony held at Naval Dockyard, Visakhapatnam. These three ISVs are in addition to the first batch of ISVs commissioned last year on 04 Jun 14 and will constitute the 84th Immediate Support Vessel Squadron based at

Visakhapatnam. Two ISVs have been built by Rodman Spain whereas one ISV has been built by the Abu Dhabi Ship Builders (ADSB). The project was a joint collaboration between Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) Ltd, Ship Builders and the Indian Navy.

Vice Admiral Satish Soni was received on arrival at the Naval Jetty by Commodore KA Bopanna, Naval Officer-in-Charge (NOIC), Andhra Pradesh. The Admiral was presented a fifty-man Guard and introduced to the Commanding Officers of the ISVs thereafter. The inaugural address was delivered by the NOIC, Andhra Pradesh. Lieutenants Jai Kishore, Shobhit Saxena and Vaibhav Bhardwaj, Commanding Officers of T-38, T-39 and T-40 respectively, read out the Commissioning Warrants. Hoisting of the Naval Ensign onboard for the first time and 'Breaking of the Commissioning Pennant' with the National Anthem being played marked the completion of the Commissioning Ceremony.

"These ISVs were brought to Naval Dockyard Mumbai where Delivery Acceptance Trials were carried out. These ships have sailed 1,200 nautical miles from Mumbai to Visakhapatnam over duration of 12 days before getting commissioned at the Eastern Naval Command," Vice Admiral Satish Soni said while addressing the gathering, adding that the ISVs proved their sturdiness as they crossed successfully the Gulf of Mannar facing strong winds and high seas.

The ISVs are armed with Heavy Machine Guns (HMGs) and are fitted with state of the art radar and navigation equipment. They are fitted with two caterpillar engines of 1600 MHP each to provide water jet propulsion, which provides the vessels a high speed of 40 knots and an endurance of 500 nautical miles. These ships are capable of carrying out day and night surveillance and can be used for rapid insertions/extraction of MARCOS for military intervention.

The induction and deployment of these ships will augment the ongoing efforts to bolster coastal security and provide protection to our offshore assets from asymmetric threats. These ships would enhance Indian Navy's capability in

furthering its mandate of maritime safety and security over the Offshore Developmental Areas on the Eastern seaboard.

Source: [Business-Standard](#), 24 Mar 2015

### **India Wants to Lease another Russian Nuclear Submarine**

India has asked Russia to transfer another nuclear submarine for lease, a high-placed source in the system of Russia's military and technical cooperation with foreign countries said on Tuesday.

The project 971 Kashalot-class submarines may become the second submarine that Russia transfers to India for lease, the source said. "In January this year, the Indian side suggested transferring the second project 971 multipurpose nuclear submarine Kashalot for lease," the source said, adding "the Russian side is studying the issue."

"The procedure will most likely be similar to the procedure, which was used for transferring the first submarine called Nerpa (dubbed Charka by India) to the Indian side," the source said. A representative of Russia's shipbuilding industry also told TASS that "the Indian side is requesting to transfer this submarine to it for lease."

TASS has not yet received any official confirmation of this information. The project 971 Nerpa nuclear submarine joined the Indian Navy in the spring of 2012. The submarine was laid down back in 1991 and Russia finished its construction after it received financing from the Indian side. The Nerpa was leased from Russia for a term of ten years. The Times of India reported late last year that India wanted to lease the second Russian nuclear submarine.

Source: [Russia and India Report](#), 24 Mar 2015

### **Indian Navy Plane Crashes in Goa, Two Officers On Board Go Missing**

An Indian Navy surveillance aircraft crashed about 25 nautical miles south-west off Goa with two officers on-board missing. A Dornier maritime surveillance aircraft, which was on a routine training sortie, crashed on Tuesday at around 11 pm and two officers on board have gone missing, navy sources said.

A search and rescue operation has been launched following the crash. “One survivor has been rescued. Search is on to locate two more officers including a pilot and observer,” they said.

Source: [IBC World News](#), 25 Mar 2015

### **India, China Agree on Three Step Peace Process**

India and China have agreed to maintain peace and tranquility in the border areas which was a “pre-requisite” for continued growth of bilateral relations as also to enhance cooperation in key areas, including counter-terrorism, maritime security and civil nuclear energy sector.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also looking forward to his visit to China to interact with the top leadership, hoping it will have “concrete outcomes” and take the bilateral relationship to a new level. The Prime Minister to Chinese state councilor Yang Jiechi, who called on the Prime Minister on Tuesday and conveyed the greetings of President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang, reportedly conveyed this.

In a first such engagement since the Modi-led government came to power, the special representatives (SRs) of India and China held 18th round of talks on boundary issue and agreed to further expand contacts between the forces of the two countries as these constitute important confidence building measures for maintaining peace and tranquility in the border areas.

“The talks were marked by cordiality and candor and were held in a constructive and forward looking atmosphere,” the ministry external affairs (MEA) said on Tuesday at the end of talks, which were co-chaired by national security advisor Ajit Doval and Chinese state councilor Yang Jiechi.

Comprehensively reviewing and expressing satisfaction over the talks held so far in previous rounds, the SRs discussed issues to “reach a mutually acceptable framework for resolution of the Boundary Question on the basis of the agreement on the political parameters and guiding principles,” a statement from the MEA said.

During the talks, they emphasized commitment to the three-step process to seek a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable resolution of the vexed issue at an early date and “agreed to take necessary steps to maintain peace and tranquility in the border areas which is a pre-requisite for continued growth of bilateral relations”.

“Expressing satisfaction at the growing interaction between the border forces of the two countries, the two sides agreed to “further expand such contacts as these constitute important confidence building measures for maintaining peace and tranquility in the border areas,” it said.

The statement further added that the two sides exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual interest and agreed to enhance their consultations on counter-terrorism, maritime security, climate change, reform of United Nation and civil nuclear energy cooperation.

Meanwhile, outlining his vision for closer India-China relations and its significance to the region and the world, Mr Modi hoped that his visit to China (in May) will have “concrete outcomes and take the relationship to a new level,” a PMO statement said. During the meeting, the Prime Minister also recalled Mr Xi’s visit to India in September last as Mr Yang briefed Mr Modi on the preparations for his upcoming visit to China.

Mr Yang and national security advisor Ajit Doval, who jointly co-chaired the 18th Round of talks on the boundary issue, also briefed the PM about the deliberations. After the meeting, Chinese news agency Xinhua reported that Mr Modi said he would like to have in-depth exchanges of views with Chinese leaders on furthering of bilateral ties when he visits China. "This would also send a positive message to the international community on the efforts being made by the two countries in developing friendship cooperation," he was quoted as saying by Xinhua. Mr Modi said the bilateral relations are moving on fast track and in the correct direction set by the leaders of the two countries.

Source: [Asian Age](#), 25 Mar 2015

### **Chinese Military Bases in South China Sea Worries India**

India has raised eyebrows over artificial islands that China is building in the South China Sea region -- which can allow Beijing to deploy naval and air forces -- in the strategic waterway that is imperative for Delhi's Asia-Pacific outreach as well as energy investments.

Delhi has stated that stability in the region is necessary for economic prosperity and asserted that threat of force should not be used to settle disputes. Singapore Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen had recently appealed to India to play a bigger role in the ASEAN region as Delhi does not harbour hegemonistic ambitions.

"We call on all parties to avoid the threat or use of force and pursue resolution of territorial and maritime disputes through all peaceful means, in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law," a diplomatic source here said. India is in the process of beefing up engagement across economic spheres in the ASEAN region, including oil blocks in Vietnam in the SCS region. Delhi is looking to boost its presence in the Asia-Pacific region following PM Narendra Modi's visit there last November. "We hope that their presence and participation will increase -- that

really adds up to engagement and confidence building and mutual understanding," Ng had said in a recent interview to news agency Bloomberg, adding, "India is a big country and it's an influential country." India's larger presence in the region could give Southeast Asian nations a cushion against China as that country seeks to make territorial claims to the majority of the South China Sea.

ASEAN and India have a convergence of interest in ensuring the role of existing ASEAN-led security architectures. A robust programme of ASEAN-India post-2015 cooperation that includes maritime cooperation will help to achieve this goal, a diplomatic source averred.

"India enjoys some advantages in ASEAN. First, India does not have territorial/maritime disputes with ASEAN countries. In addition, the record of India-ASEAN cooperation suggests that the two sides do not suffer from the "strategic trust deficit", while the bilateral cooperation seems to have got a new boost from India's current Look East and Act East policy.

"And lastly, the existing cooperative ASEAN-led mechanisms can still be the effective platforms for further enhancing our bilateral cooperation," a noted expert on regional security, who did not wish to be identified, told ET.

Diplomatic sources claimed that China's creation of artificial islands in the South China Sea is happening "so fast" that it will soon be able to claim rights over Exclusive Economic Zones of other countries in the region.

Work by China on artificial islands in the Spratly archipelago in SCS region is progressing fast, according to some recently published satellite photographs. China is building ports and fuel depots as well as two probable airstrips that experts said would allow Beijing to project power across Southeast Asia.

China claims most of the energy-rich South China Sea, through which \$5 trillion in ship-borne trade passes every year. The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan also have overlapping claims. Beijing has rejected diplomatic protests by

Manila and Hanoi saying the activities fall "within the scope of China's sovereignty".

Chinese strategic experts claim that the build-up was being driven by what Beijing considers security threat from countries in the region. Diplomatic sources claimed that the islands would give China ability to create an air defense identification zone (ADIZ) above the South China Sea. Japan and the United States criticised China when it imposed an ADIZ above the East China Sea in 2013. China has occasionally claimed the South China Sea since the late 1940s but Beijing has made stronger claims in the past few years with tensions rising particularly with Vietnam and Philippines.

Source: [Economic Times](#), 26 Mar 2015

### **Indian Naval Vessels to Reach Sri Lanka's East Coast for Drill on 27<sup>th</sup> April**

Four Indian Navy vessels will arrive in Sri Lanka on Friday to hold a three-day training exercise for Lankan Navy personnel in the country's east coast. Four ships from the Indian Navy's First Training Squadron, namely Indian Naval Ships Tir and Kesari, Indian Coast Guard Ship Varuna and Sail Training Ship Sudarshini, are visiting Trincomalee from March 27-29, the Indian High Commission here said on Thursday.

A series of professional, training, cultural and sports interactions will take place between the ships' crew and Sri Lankan Navy personnel in the country's eastern coast.

Ships from the First Training Squadron have been visiting Sri Lanka regularly. Their last visit to the island nation was in April 2013 during which valuable training opportunities were provided to the Sri Lankan Navy. The First Training Squadron, which comprises six ships including two sail ships, imparts sea training to Naval and Coast Guard Sea Trainee officers.

The ships of the First Training Squadron are the only ships of Indian Navy and Coast Guard where intensive practical ab-initio sea training in seamanship, navigation, ship handling, boat work and engineering is conducted for officers over a period of 24 weeks, according to a press release.

The Training Squadron is headed by Captain S R Ayyar, Senior Officer First Training Squadron and Commanding Officer INS Tir. The First Training Squadron is a part of Indian Navy's prestigious Southern Naval Command (SNC) headed by Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Vice Admiral SPS Cheema.

SNC is the Training Command of the Indian Navy, which conducts naval training for officers and sailors, including those from friendly foreign countries. As one of the finest destinations for training, Indian Navy has trained more than 11,000 international trainees from over 40 countries in the last four decades.

Source: [Zee News](#), 27 Mar 015

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### **Rongsheng Plans to Sell Shipbuilding, Engineering Assets**

China Rongsheng Heavy Industries Group Holdings Ltd., the shipbuilder whose woes made it a symbol of the country's credit binge, said it planned to sell assets to an unidentified Chinese acquirer.

The company intends to sell the core assets and liabilities of its onshore shipbuilding and offshore engineering businesses, according to a statement to the Hong Kong exchange Monday. Rongsheng's shares, which were halted March 11, will resume trading on March 17.

Once China's largest shipbuilder outside government control, Shanghai-based Rongsheng has been searching for funds after orders for new ships dried up and the company fell behind on principal and interest payments on 8.57 billion yuan (\$1.4 billion) of bank loans. Rongsheng's struggles illustrate the difficulties shipbuilders face in competing with state-owned yards that have government backing and easier access to funds.

Rongsheng and the proposed buyer have entered into an exclusivity period while assets and liabilities are valued, according to the statement. The agreement will expire on June 30, the company said. Rongsheng said March 5 it wouldn't proceed with a proposed warrant sale after Kingwin Victory Investment Ltd. owner Wang Ping — a potential investor who had pledged as much as HK \$3.2 billion (\$412 million) — was said to have been detained.

The company is trying to complete a restructuring by June and has proposed to change its name to China Huarong Energy Co. to more accurately reflect its expansion and new business scope.

Yangzijiang Shipbuilding Holdings Ltd. said previously China's government about buying a stake in Rongsheng had approached it, and that no decision had been made. Yangzijiang Chief Financial Officer Liu Hua said today that the company isn't involved in the agreement announced by Rongsheng, according to the company's external representative.

Rongsheng has sought help from the government to benefit from a rebound in China's shipbuilding industry the world's second biggest after cutting its workforce and running up debts amid a global downturn in orders.

As orders for new ships began to dry up, China in 2013 issued a three-year plan urging financial institutions to support the shipbuilding industry. Ship owners placing orders for China-made vessels, engines and some parts should get better funding, the State Council said. A third of the more than 1,600 shipyards in China could shut down in the next five years, an industry association predicted earlier.

In September, the government responded by listing Rongsheng's Jiangsu shipyard unit among 51 shipbuilding facilities in China deemed worthy of policy support as the industry grapples with overcapacity.

Still, Rongsheng's debt amounted to seven times its equity as of June, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. Some of Rongsheng's subsidiaries, including Hefei Rong An Power Machinery Co. and Rongsheng Machinery Co., signed agreements with domestic lenders, led by Shanghai Pudong Development Bank, to extend debt repayments to the end of 2015, the company said in October.

Source: [Hellenic Shipping News](#), 17 Mar 2015

### **North Sea "Under Pressure" From Industrialization**

A new report from the House of Lords European Union Committee says the North Sea is one of the most industrialized seas in the world. "While ships queue to

progress through its southern channels, navigable space allocated to wind farms could, according to some estimates, increase fifty-fold within just a few years," said the report.

"At the same time, it is essential to develop coherent networks of environmentally protected areas and engage in the European Commission's long term plan to support sustainable economic growth in the marine sectors. "We discovered that there is no single map or database plotting the various, often conflicting, uses of the Sea. Data are not in short supply, but duplication of effort wastes resources and means that the most value is not being derived from what is available.

"We conclude that there is an urgent need to commit to a properly resourced single cross-border data collection initiative. If appropriately funded, the evolving European Marine Observation and Data network could fulfill this function.

"Tensions in the marine environment, both between contrasting environmental and economic objectives and between different economic users, can be managed through effective planning. Such planning is embryonic and unpredictable around the North Sea. The UK Government should initiate longer term strategic planning for the seas around the UK coastline, along the lines of the Dutch North Sea 2050 Agenda. "There are also substantial regulatory tensions. Different countries around the North Sea, for example, take different approaches to defining the environmental quality of their parts of the basin.

"The European Commission should improve guidance on the implementation of relevant EU law. As the responsibility for the marine environment lies at a local, an EU and an international level, we urge the UK Government to work with English local authorities to identify and address barriers to their co-operation with other authorities around the North Sea.

"Current co-operation initiatives demonstrate that consistent political leadership is required in order for co-operation to flourish. It is also clear from experience that co-operation can deliver efficiencies and enable limited resources to go further. "Cross-

border energy co-operation in the North Sea has enormous potential, but regulatory barriers remain and we recommend that the Government work to overcome these. Co-operation in fisheries management has been furthered by the new responsibilities given to the Advisory Councils, but there is insufficient funding available for the enhanced role.

"We recommend that the UK Government consider how it can support the Advisory Councils to fulfill their duties. We also recommend that the European Commission publish guidance on the wider funding opportunities that exist to stimulate greater co-operation across all sectors.

"Successful future marine co-operation in the North Sea region will require strong and effective political leadership. We recommend that the UK Government co-operate with other North Sea Member States to develop the pilot marine planning project that was proposed to us by the German government. This should lead the way towards the effective implementation of the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive and contribute to proactive planning on the part of Member States.

"We support the idea of a North Sea Maritime Forum to bring the full range of stakeholders together in an atmosphere of collaboration, but note that strong political leadership is still lacking."We conclude that no existing body or mechanism has a broad enough remit to facilitate the political co-operation required to make the necessary step-change in the management of the North Sea basin. "We recommend therefore, that the UK Government convene a North Sea ministerial conference in order to develop a holistic approach to all economic and environmental issues affecting the North Sea. Importantly, the conference should seek to deliver the urgently required political and strategic vision which will sustain this precious resource and secure it for future generations."

Source: [Offshore Shipping Online](#), 17 Mar 2015

## **Goa Shipyard to Tie Up With Foreign Yards to Build Mine Counter-Measures Vessels (MCMVs)**

After bagging the deal to build Mines Counter-Measures Vessels (MCMVs) for the Indian Navy, Goa Shipyard Ltd has decided to tie up with foreign yards for the technology transfer required to create these high-tech ships.

The Union Defence Ministry had recently cleared the Rs 32,000 crore-worth project to manufacture 12 MCMVs, which will be built by the GSL. "We will be able to roll out the vessels six years from now. The actual construction on this project will begin after three years," GSL Chairman and Managing Director Rear Admiral Shekhar Mittal said on Saturday.

He was talking to reporters on the sidelines of launching of an OPV for the Indian Coast Guard. Mittal said that India does not have the technology required for MCMVs.

"We don't have the technology. That is why we are going to import it. GSL has a capacity to absorb the technology," he said. The Goa-based yard is contemplating the possibility of going for a tie-up with the foreign counterpart for technology transfer.

"We will take minimum possible technology from abroad," Mittal said. The GSL has shortlisted countries like Russia, Spain, Sweden, Italy and Korea, where they can scout for the required technology.

"Depending on the naval specifications, we will finalise the partner," he said. The GSL will float a global tender, inviting expression of interest for the technology transfer, Mittal added. The MCMVs, which are part of the 'Make In India' campaign would be 50 per cent indigenous. The CMD said efforts are on to make it more than 50 per cent indigenous.

Source: [Brahmand.com](http://Brahmand.com), 23 Mar 2015

## **New Coral Sea Shipping Routes Proposed**

An Australian proposal to extend protection of the World Heritage Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait east into the Coral Sea will go before the IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee in May.

The proposal, which was agreed to by the IMO Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications, and Search and Rescue this week, would formalize two well-established shipping routes on either side of an area for ships to avoid.

Two new two-way routes, 5 n miles wide, would take shipping East of Diamond passage on one side, with the second route west of Homes Reef. The aim is to reduce the risk of ship collisions and groundings by separating opposing traffic, at the same time ensuring ships keep clear of reefs, shoals, and island in the sensitive marina environment, according to an IMO media release this week.

This would add 11 n miles, or a 0.3% increase, to a typical 3,800 ship voyage from a Queensland port to Shanghai, according to a video produced by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) on the internet.

"These ship routing measures serve as Associated Protective Measures for AMSA's proposal to extend the Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait Particular Sensitive Sea Area [PSSA] into the southwest Coral Sea," according to a statement provided to IHS Maritime by AMSA. The proposal for the PSSA will go to the IMO Marine Environment Protection Committee in May and, if adopted by the IMO Maritime Safety Committee in June, come into force by the end of this year.

Source: [IHS Maritime 360](#), 23 Mar 2015



### **Damen, Bellona Partner on Low-Emission Designs**

A three-year partnership has been launched between Oslo-based NGO Bellona Foundation and Dutch company Damen Shipyards Group with the main goal of exploring and developing concept vessels for the future. The agreement was officially signed March 18 during an industry event in Stavanger.

The Bellona Foundation and Damen both acknowledge that today's global shipping industry will need to undergo substantial change to achieve its own climate and environmental objectives. The NGO and Damen have joined forces to work toward reducing the impact on the climate of a range of commercial and leisure vessels, as well as fleets employed by the aquaculture industry.

"One of Bellona's goals is to make the ships of the future independent of fossil fuels. This partnership will provide us with new knowledge on innovative shipping construction that will contribute towards achieving that objective, said Frederic Hauge, founder and president of The Bellona Foundation. "Today the global shipping industry emits large amounts of CO<sub>2</sub>, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxide and other gases harmful to the climate and environment, and the European fleet is large and in need of renewal. The next three years of partnership with Damen will make us better equipped to handle the challenges, both domestically and internationally."

Damen's Remko Hottentot, Sales Manager Norway, stationed at Damen's Norway Office in Stavanger, added, "We have a strong focus on sustainability and the vision of each organization complements the other in terms of environmental awareness. At Damen, the focus will be on creating alternative solutions that contribute to reducing harmful maritime emissions into both the air and the water. This will go hand in hand with initiatives to develop cost-effective efficiencies through reduced consumption of potentially harmful inputs such as fuel, paint and lubricating oil. During this long term

relationship we foresee in general a valuable focus on cooperating in the creation of environmental technical sustainable solutions and the fostering of political support.”

Hauge believes that the Bellona Foundation, as well as Norway’s maritime community as a whole, can learn a good deal from Damen when it comes to developing the next generation of low-emissions vessels. He sees Damen as an international trendsetter challenging the Norwegian mindset in a positive manner.

From his perspective, this partnership will improve the Bellona Foundation’s capability to influence both the Norwegian and European shipping industries. Bellona has a 29-year record of accomplishment of working on maritime political matters at an international level, from its offices in both Oslo and Brussels. The partnership with Damen grants Bellona access to new knowledge and technology that will enable it to influence Norwegian and European politics even more than before.

Source: [Marine Link](#), 18 Mar 2015

### **The Azores: First Witness to Global Marine Plastic Pollution**

It is estimated that 80% of pollution in the ocean is plastic. This debris has devastating effects on marine ecosystems and, as a consequence, on human beings. Entanglement, lacerations, infections or death by drowning, suffocation, or strangulation, the negative impacts of plastic pollution on marine animals are numerous. Micro-plastics suspended in surface water can be ingested by aquatic organisms, such as plankton, and infect the entire food chain. Furthermore, as plastics disintegrate, they can release toxic compounds that were added in the manufacturing process. These toxins can also contaminate the food chain. Finally, floating plastics create new habitats that further enable the transport of invasive species over long distances.

As part of the “Race for Water Odyssey”, a team of scientists is evaluating the scale of plastic contamination by going onto islands located in the trash vortexes created

by this pollution. These islands act as natural barriers to the long-term transport of marine plastics, by trapping the drifting plastics on their shores. As such, their beaches provide valuable and representative sites for evaluating the types and the quantities of plastics present in the surrounding waters. The Archipelago of the Azores, located close to the center of the North Atlantic trash gyre greatly suffers from plastic pollution. Thus, it constitutes the first witness of an unprecedented environmental disaster.

Five beaches were chosen in collaboration with local experts such as Carla Damaso, from the Sea Observatory of the Azores and Dr. Christopher Kim Pham, researcher in the Oceanography department of the University of the Azores. These shores were studied using a systematic and standardized scientific approach based on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)'s method. Macro-debris were collected, categorized depending on composition and original use, and weighed. Meso-debris and micro-debris were collected by researchers using sieves, and sent for analysis to the Lausanne Federal Polytechnic School's Central Environmental Laboratory.

Source: [National Geographic](#), 25 Mar 2015

### **Arctic Sea Ice is at its Lowest**

The spring and summer melt season is officially on for Arctic sea ice, and it's not off to a good start. The 2015 melt season will start with a record low maximum ice extent.

According to scientists at the National Snow and Ice Data Centre, sea ice extent was 425,000 square miles below the 1981-2010 average. That's the equivalent of 1.6 times the size of Texas (the largest state in the Lower 48) or 411 Rhode Island's (the smallest state). No matter how you measure it, it represents a huge missing chunk of ice.

The Arctic has seen its sea ice dwindle across all seasons. According to the most recent Arctic Report Card, winter has been losing sea ice at a rate of 2.6% per decade, while the summer extent has decreased at an even greater rate of 13.3% per decade. Higher air and water temperatures in the Arctic — the fastest warming region in the world — are two of the main culprits spurring the decline.

As it decreases, the lack of Arctic sea ice could reshape the economy of the region, opening previously inaccessible areas for oil and gas extraction and shipping. However, it would also pose a major national security concern in addition to altering local ways of life. Sea ice also provides crucial coastal protection in the Arctic, hunting grounds for local tribes, and habitats for creatures from polar bears to seals.

In addition to disappearing sea ice, the ice that does remain is also getting younger and thinner. Younger ice tends to be thinner and more brittle, making it easier to break up each melt season. That is contributing to the quickness in overall sea ice decline. Last year, old ice accounted for 10% of the overall ice pack. In 1987, the first year data is available for, it comprised 26% of all sea ice.

Paradoxically, Antarctic sea ice hit a record maximum last year. But the drop in Arctic sea ice is greater than the corresponding gain in sea ice around Antarctica. As a result, the amount of global sea ice continues a net downward trend. Similarly, land ice in Antarctica continues a long-term downward trend.

This year's record low maximum for winter sea ice in the Arctic doesn't guarantee another record low minimum when summer rolls around in August. But it is cause for concern and provides a clear sign of how the planet is changing as the Earth warms. "The fact that we're starting the melt season with low — maybe record low — winter extent cannot be good," Jennifer Francis, a Rutgers University Arctic researcher, said in an email right before the records came in.

Source: [Centralpa.com](http://Centralpa.com), 25 Mar 2015