



# MAKING WAVES

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### **New order tasks Coast Guard to intensify Maritime Security under state of lawlessness**

-Ian Nicolas P. Cigaral

Memorandum Order (MO) no. 4, signed on September 26 by Executive Secretary Salvador C. Medialdea, directs the PCG to “intensify its activities related to the enforcement and maintenance of maritime safety and security.” The document was issued to expand the coverage of MO no. 3 which provides guidelines to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) on the measures they can take under the state of emergency, Mr. Medialdea said. Released on Friday, the document was issued after President Rodrigo R. Duterte put the country under a state of lawless violence following a deadly blast in Davao City on September 2 that killed at least 14 people.

Section 1 of the memo orders “additional PCG units and personnel to increase visibility and security... in all Philippine ports, harbors, and major coastal areas.” The MO also stressed that there is a need for “a comprehensive implementation of the President’s directive to prevent further loss of innocent lives and destruction of property in the entire Philippine territory including the country’s maritime jurisdiction. In addition, as mandated in Section 2 of the memo, the Coast Guard must intensify the following activities:

- inspection of all merchant ships and vessels to ensure compliance with safety standards, rules and regulations.
- surveillance and inspection of persons, vessels and watercrafts navigating within the maritime jurisdiction of the Philippines, and suspected of committing, or conspiring to commit, an offense in the Philippines.
- control and flow of traffic of vessels within the maritime jurisdiction of the Philippines.

- maintenance, in coordination with the Maritime Industry Authority, of a unified numbering system for all Philippine-registered vessels, watercrafts, and water conveyances that are not covered by the International Maritime Organization numbering system.

Secretary Medialdea also directed the Department of Justice (DOJ) to closely coordinate with the PCG and other law-enforcement agencies for the prompt investigation and prosecution of individuals caught “committing, or conspiring to commit, acts of lawless violence.” In a press briefing in Malacañang on Thursday, PNP Chief Ronald M. dela Rosa said there is no definite time yet as to when President Duterte will lift the state of lawlessness in the country because the proclamation is linked to the government’s ongoing war against illegal drugs.

Source: [www.bworldonline.com](http://www.bworldonline.com), 1 October 2016

### **Nigerian Government urged to boost Maritime Security**

The Navy needed more platforms to help checkmate burgeoning influx of piracy, sea robbery and other forms of illegality along the waterways, James Oluwole, the Flag Officer Commanding (FOC) Eastern Naval Command of the Nigerian Navy told reporters. From what we are seeing, the challenges are enormous. We need more boats and ships to help us to tackle the different layers of defense, he said.

The backwaters require different assets; the territorial waters also require different assets like the offshore patrol vehicles, he added. According to him, more allocation to the Navy would help the command to improve on its operational strategy in order to improve the policing of the waterways. Enditem

Source: [news4security.com](http://news4security.com), 7 October 2016



## **AU to hold extraordinary summit on Maritime Security in Togo**

A local fisherman goes fishing in the waters around the Island of Mozambique, located in the northern Mozambican province of Nampula. (Xinhua/Liu Dalong) ADDIS ABABA, Oct. 10 (Xinhua). The African Union (AU) will be holding an extraordinary summit next week on maritime security, safety and development on the African continent in Lome, Togo.

A statement from the pan-African bloc said the summit has been scheduled to take place between Oct. 11 and Oct. 15. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the AU Commission, and President Faure Gnassingbe of Togo met earlier this month in Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa to discuss preparations for the summit, the statement said.

"We're looking forward to the Summit. The sea is a huge resource for us ... The world is looking at the sea as the next economic frontier, and so Africa can not afford to lag behind," noted Dlamini-Zuma during her meeting with President Gnassingbe. They have also discussed the need to have a team of lawyers as well as an AU body to help in determining every Member States' continental shelf, it said.

The statement added the two leaders underlined the importance of tapping into the resources of the sea to increase Africa's prosperity, instead of allowing those resources to become a source of conflict. The Summit is expected to adopt an African Maritime Security Charter, said the statement, therefore, the Heads of State and Government will take the discussions beyond security to include issues of fishing, transport, mining, and tourism, which can help boost job creation and employment for African countries. President Gnassingbe assured Dlamini Zuma of the advanced state of readiness in Togo, and looked forward to welcoming the Chairperson in Lome, according to the statement.

Source: [news.xinhuanet.com](http://news.xinhuanet.com), 10 October 2016

## **Xiangshan Forum reaches consensus on Maritime Security**

The seventh Xiangshan Forum concluded in Beijing on Wednesday, with attendees from 59 countries and five international organizations reaching consensus on maritime security, among other issues. About 500 defense officials and scholars gathered to discuss global security cooperation at the forum. Cai Yingting, president of the PLA Academy of Military Science, said consensus had been reached on five aspects, when delivering his concluding speech.

Maritime disputes should be handled by directly involved parties through consultations and negotiations in line with the UN Charter and the international law and with respect to historical facts, according to the consensus reached at the forum. Maritime activities should be more regulated and crisis control boosted under a regional multilateral security framework.

Cooperation in navigation escort missions, humanitarian assistance, pirate crackdowns and maritime anti-terror operations will be enhanced to safeguard harmonious and stable maritime order in the Asia-Pacific area, according to the consensus reached at the forum. Attendees agreed to heighten coordination on various security mechanisms and to build a model of security governance characteristic of the Asia-Pacific region through the Asian approach that values mutual respect, seeking consensus through consultations and taking care of the degree of comfort of all sides.

Participants also agreed to prevent and fight all forms of terrorism, avoiding politicizing the matter or applying "double standards." The consensus reached by the forum also covered global governance and building a new type of international relations featuring cooperation and mutually beneficial arrangements.

The forum was launched by a Chinese academic association in 2006 and has been held every two years since 2006. Since 2015, China has invited more foreign defense officials and scholars to the forum and upgraded it to an annual event.

Source: [www.globaltimes.cn](http://www.globaltimes.cn), 13 October 2016

## **Maritime Security Threats In Southeast Asia: A collective approach**

- Bernard Miranda

Being a small island-nation with busy and congested waterways, Singapore faces significant maritime security challenges, in particular maritime terrorism which is a common threat also faced by neighbouring states. Hence information sharing, international and inter-agency collaboration constitute the way ahead for a collective solution against such challenges.

The arrest of six militants in neighbouring Batam, Indonesia reminded Singapore of the asymmetric and unconventional threat it can face from the region. While the plausibility of the threat of a rocket attack from Batam Island continues to be analysed, one should also look at other modalities that the militants could have used to overcome range and accuracy factors, for example bringing the weapon closer by means of vessels at sea.

Other threats like “floating bomb” by hijacked sensitive vessels or explosive-laden small boats intent on ramming high-value targets, remain concerns. The recent missiles purportedly fired by Houthi rebels at the USS Mason and USS Ponce from the Yemeni coast is another example of how non-professionally trained fighting forces can attempt to wreak havoc.

### *Information Sharing and International Collaboration*

Information sharing and international collaboration has been established over the years to deal with varied maritime security threats. Such mechanisms like the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) bring countries together to collaborate against a common threat. At the national level the Singapore Government established the National Maritime Security System in 2011 to provide the dual focus of a Single Concept of Operation and a Unified Command to prepare, prevent and respond to maritime terrorism. The Singapore Maritime Crisis Centre (SMCC) together with enforcement agencies is highly vigilant, prepared and responsive.

Singapore’s Home Affairs Minister stated, after the arrest of the six militants, that Singapore was aware of their activities and noted the country’s security agencies and

their Indonesian counterparts had coordinated to closely monitor and apprehend the perpetrators. Such information sharing and collaboration results from years of commitment and effort, including linkages established amongst navies and law enforcement agencies especially in the maritime domain. An organisation such as the Information Fusion Centre (IFC) at the Changi Command and Control Centre (CC2C) has grown in effectiveness and stature as a model for regional naval cooperation.

Focussing on all areas of maritime security as its core business, the IFC has established a strong liaison officer presence and effective networked systems, data base and sense-making tool for data analysis. There is also the secure information sharing system for Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) member navies and the Malacca Strait Patrol-Information sharing system for real-time information exchange between Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. The network connectivity and usefulness of these systems will be further enhanced with planned new data architecture and mobile capability.

In late September this year, the Republic of Singapore Navy hosted Exercise Deep Sabre. This exercise was the latest in a series of PSI multi-national exercises that brings countries together to collaborate against a common threat. This exercise featured 800 participants from 21 countries in building capacity against a ship simulating as a Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) carrier. Such exercises, by sheer size and complexity exhibits the collective will to deter would-be perpetrators and enhance collaboration. Regional players must continue to build on established linkages and continue to support their presence through liaison officers' attachments and participation in collaborative exercises.

#### *SMCC – Inter-Agency Collaboration*

The core team in both entities that form the SMCC – the Operations and Sense-making Groups – achieved Initial Operational Capability during Exercise Northstar VIII in 2011. Building on this, the core team then achieved Full Operational Capability in Exercise Highcrest 2013 by demonstrating its ability to work with counterpart land agencies in handling multiple threats both on land and sea.

The achievements in a relatively short time were no mean feat. The capabilities were attained through:

- 1) team forming and building to overcome inter-agency stovepipes.
- 2) commitment from agencies to fund and staff the posts from five different agencies the Navy, Police, Immigration and Checkpoints Authority, Customs and the Maritime and Port Authority.
- 3) establishment of the Crisis Command Centre at the CC2C and its sense-making and operations systems.
- 4) unifying management and leadership.
- 5) having a national-level training and exercises framework that validates capabilities and renews inter-agency commitment with the Whole-of-Government approach.
- 6) coherent public communications plan to emphasise the need for vigilance against would-be perpetrators.

#### *Coordination and the Challenges Ahead*

Dealing with maritime terrorism requires a phased and scalable approach in order to be effective. Coordination is done on a daily basis through working group meetings, inter-agency training and exercises with established processes and procedures that are accepted by all agencies. Ownership is key to operational and capability development, with pre-assignments of Incident Managers to deal with scenarios timely and decisively. There could be at least four scenarios:

- 1) from land – as in the recent case of the Batam rocket plot.
- 2) from the sea – militants/terrorists could plausibly launch a boat from neighbouring lands and hijack an innocent vessel for use as an attack platform.
- 3) at sea – an attack from a militant/terrorist vessel on an innocent merchant ship.
- 4) a combination of scenarios attempting to dilute the defences. The organisation needs to be nimble enough to respond to unanticipated or unknown threats, including “Black Swan” scenarios.

Enforcement agencies should continue to scale surveillance and presence with co-ordinated efforts in operations centres and at sea. New capabilities like the Police Coast Guards Patrol Interdiction, 2nd Generation PK class High Speed Interception boats and unmanned surface vessels enhance presence and response at sea, while panoramic electro-optics and tethered unmanned aerial vehicles will enhance especially “blind zone” surveillance capabilities. Importantly, to be nimble and responsive, there is a requirement for steadfast leadership and clear lines of command. The SMCC provides this support mechanism that coordinates and manages operations, swiftly and decisively, enabling the concepts for Unified Command and Single Concept of Operations.

In the ever-changing threat environment, and with scarce resources, the information sharing and international collaboration initiatives and SMCC must continue to demonstrate ability to coordinate, manage and provide leadership support in dealing with maritime terrorism. In this regard, various countries and agencies need to continue to support organisations such as the IFC and SMCC and sustain this international and inter-agency framework to maintain their operational edge.

Source: [www.eurasiareview.com](http://www.eurasiareview.com), 15 October 2016

### **Japan to continue Maritime Security ties**

-Rasika Somarathna

Speaking to a group of journalists aboard the ship ‘JS Kashima’ at the Colombo harbour, Commander Iwasaki, highlighted the strategically important geopolitical location of Sri Lanka overlooking the main Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOC) in the Indian Ocean. In this backdrop, he said Sri Lanka will continue to play a crucial role in maintaining maritime security in the region and added that Japan will always help Sri Lanka. The Commander also observed that it was important for all countries to work together to ensure an open and stable ocean, where the rule of law is dominated.

The Commander also referred to the Sri Lanka-Japan Dialogue on Maritime Security, Safety and Oceanic Issues an outcome of the Joint Declaration on a Comprehensive Partnership between Sri Lanka and Japan inked last year and added that this will go a long way in boosting ties between the two nations. Commander Iwasaki said that 190 newly commissioned officers were on board in the three training squadron ships and they will share knowledge with their local counterparts during their stay. Along with JS Kashima, two other vessels, JS Asagiri and JS Setoyuki of the JMSDF arrived in Colombo on a five day goodwill visit. A reception was held onboard “Kashima” with Defence Secretary Karunasena Hettiarachchi as Guest of Honour.

The dignitaries were accorded a Guard of Honour upon their arrival and were welcomed by Commander Iwasaki and three Commanding Officers of the ships. Japanese Ambassador Kenichi Suganuma, Chief of Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshal Kolitha Gunatilleke, Navy Commander, Vice Admiral Ravindra Wijegunaratne, Special Advisor to the Japanese Prime Minister, Dr. Hiroto Izumi, Minister Arjuna Ranatunge and senior Naval Officers also attended.

Source: [dailynews.lk](http://dailynews.lk), 15 october 2016



### **'Explosion' near Porbandar Naval Base sparks panic**

RAJKOT/AHMEDABAD: Security agencies including the Indian Navy, Coast Guard and the local police went into a tizzy on Friday morning after a guard at the communication room of the Porbandar Naval Base claimed that he heard a sound that seemed like an explosion or a gun shot. However, they heaved a sigh of relief after a four-hour extensive search at the naval base and nearby areas, did not yield anything suspicious.

A Indian Navy spokesperson stated on his official Twitter account: "Noise heard at/ off Porbandar Naval Base is of Fire Crackers". Investigation is still on by the Navy and the local police. The security agencies are not taking any chances as the explosion-like sound came in wake of the high alert in the coastal areas of the state following intelligence input on an infiltration bid by ISI operatives from Pakistan. After the guard alerted his seniors, Navy officers informed the local police in Porbandar that conducted a thorough search at the Naval Base that was cordoned off.

"After searching the base, police and other security agencies even talked to people living near by if they heard any explosion. But none of them seemed to have heard any such sound. Also, no suspicious substance or persons were found," said M D Jadeja, deputy superintendent of police, Porbandar. High alert has been sounded across Gujarat coast following the surgical strikes recently carried out across the Line of Control by the Army. Within a week, the Border Security Force and the Indian Coast Guard have apprehended two Pakistani boats with nine crew members each, off Porbandar and Jakhau coasts.

Various agencies including the Indian Coast Guard, Navy and the Gujarat coastal police have enhanced vigil on the coast. Security has been beefed up at vital installations like temples, ports, oil refineries and other important places in Dwarka and Gir-Somnath districts after intelligence agencies alerted state police about possible infiltration bids by terrorists through the sea route.



Gujarat has over 1,600 km-long coastline and shares border with Pakistan in Kutch and Banaskantha district. Patrolling has been intensified along both land and sea border in Gujarat. The boat patrolling by marine police, Coast Guards and Navy have been intensified on the entire coastal belt. Stay updated on the go with Times of India News App. Click here to download it for your device.

Source:[timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 8 October 2016

### **US Navy Ship targeted in failed Missile attack from Yemen**

-Phil Stewart

A U.S. Navy guided missile destroyer was targeted on Sunday in a failed missile attack from territory in Yemen controlled by Iran-aligned Houthi rebels, a U.S. military spokesman told Reuters, saying neither of the two missiles hit the ship. The attempted strike on the USS Mason, which was first reported by Reuters, came just a week after a United Arab Emirates vessel came under attack from Houthis and suggests growing risks to the U.S. military from Yemen's conflict.

The U.S. government, which has become increasingly vocal about civilian casualties in the war, this weekend announced a review of its support to a Saudi Arabia-led coalition battling the Houthis after a strike on mourners in the capital Sanaa that killed up to 140 people. The failed missile attack on the USS Mason began around 7 p.m. local time, when the ship detected two inbound missiles over a 60-minute period in the Red Sea off Yemen's coast, the U.S. military said.

"Both missiles impacted the water before reaching the ship," Pentagon spokesman Captain Jeff Davis said. "There were no injuries to our sailors and no damage to the ship." Saudi Arabia and the United States blame Shi'ite Iran for supplying weapons to the Houthis. Tehran views the Houthis, who are from a Shi'ite sect, as the legitimate authority in Yemen but denies it supplies them with weapons.

A U.S. defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the first missile triggered counter-measures from the USS Mason. It was not immediately clear whether

those defenses may have helped prevent a direct hit on the ship. The USS Mason did not return fire, the official said, adding that the incident took place just north of the Bab al-Mandab strait off Yemen's southern coast.

Last week's attack on the UAE vessel also took place around the Bab al-Mandab strait, in what the UAE branded an "act of terrorism." In 2013, more than 3.4 million barrels of oil passed through the 20 km (12 mile)-wide Bab al-Mandab each day, the U.S. Energy Information Administration says. It was unclear what actions the U.S. military might take, but Davis stressed a commitment to defend freedom of navigation and protect U.S. forces.

"We will continue to take all necessary steps to ensure the safety of our ships and our servicemembers," he said. The attack also came the same day that Yemen's powerful former president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, a key Houthi ally, called for an escalation of attacks against Saudi Arabia, demanding "battle readiness at the fronts on the (Saudi) border". An estimated 10,000 people have been killed in Yemen's war. The United Nations blames Saudi-led coalition strikes for 60 percent of some 3,800 civilian deaths since they began in March 2015.

Source: [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com), 10 October 2016

## **2 Missiles fired in direction of American destroyer**

Two missiles were fired in the direction of an American destroyer by Shiite rebels in Yemen, the U.S Navy said on Monday. A Pentagon spokesman says Iran-supported Houthis fired missiles at the US destroyer in the Red Sea, according to FOX News. While the Navy said the missiles, fired in a span of 60 minutes, landed in the water before reaching the USS Mason, the launches come after another Emirati ship suffered massive damage from a rocket attack days earlier.

Meanwhile, a ballistic missile launched from Yemen apparently targeted a Saudi air base near the Muslim holy city of Mecca, Saudi and rebel media reported — the deepest

strike yet into the kingdom by Shiite rebels and their allies. In a statement, the Navy said no American sailors were injured and no damage was done to the USS Mason, an Arleigh Burke class of guided missile destroyer whose home port is Norfolk, Virginia. Lt. Ian McConnaughey, a spokesman for U.S. Navy Forces Central Command, said Monday it's unclear if the Mason was specifically targeted, though the missiles were fired in its direction. Last week, an Emirati-leased Swift boat came under rocket fire near the same area. The United Arab Emirates described the vessel as carrying humanitarian aid and having a crew of civilians, while the Houthis called the boat a warship.

Meanwhile, Saudi state television aired a brief clip of what appeared to be a projectile that was said to have landed in Taif in the ballistic missile attack. The video shows the flash of an explosion, followed by images of emergency vehicles. Taif is home to Saudi Arabia's King Fahad Air Base, which hosts U.S. military personnel training the kingdom's armed forces. The Saudi military said the missile fired late Saturday night caused no damage. The U.S. military's Central Command, which oversees troops in the Middle East, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Al-Masirah, a satellite news channel run by Yemen's Shiite rebels known as Houthis, identified the missile as a local variant of a Soviet-era Scud missile. It said the Volcano-1 missile targeted the air base.

Source: [www.fox26houston.com](http://www.fox26houston.com), 10 October 2016

### **Pentagon may Retaliate for Attack on U.S. Navy Ships**

The Pentagon on Tuesday warned that whoever fired missiles at a U.S. Navy destroyer and an accompanying ship off the coast of Yemen over the weekend had done so "at their own peril," language that suggested preparations for possible retaliation. Two shore-launched cruise missiles, which U.S. officials believe were designed to hit vessels at sea, were fired at the U.S. Navy ships on Sunday from Houthi-controlled territory of Yemen, just north of the Bab al-Mandab strait.

Both failed to hit the ships but the attack, which was first reported by Reuters, could deepen U.S. involvement in Yemen. U.S. military action in the country has largely been

reserved for the battle against al Qaeda's affiliate, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, not the Houthis. "Anybody who takes action, fires against U.S. Navy ships operating in international waters, does so at their own peril," Pentagon spokesman Captain Jeff Davis told a news briefing.

Asked whether the Pentagon was developing targets for retaliatory strikes, Davis said: "I'm not confirming that right now." U.S. support for a Saudi Arabia-led coalition battling the Houthis has been reduced in recent months, and had been under review amid growing concerns about civilian casualties in Yemen's war. It includes refueling Saudi jets that are carrying out strikes. The Houthis, allies of Iran who drove the Western- and Saudi Arabia-backed President Abd Rabbu Mansour al-Hadi from the capital in 2014, have denied firing at the USS Mason guided missile destroyer and the USS Ponce, an amphibious transport dock. But U.S. officials have told Reuters that Washington is operating under the assumption that Houthi forces fired the cruise missiles on Sunday.

Davis suggested as much on Tuesday, noting that the Houthis had previously acknowledged responsibility for firing on a vessel from the United Arab Emirates a week earlier. "The Houthis have said publicly before that they would target any ships in that area that were supporting the coalition against them," Davis said. "So the facts certainly seem to point to it, but we are still assessing and we will have more for you." The strikes against the UAE and U.S. vessels risks disrupting commercial traffic through the Bab al-Mandab strait, one of the world's busiest routes. While shipping companies have yet to divert vessels, there are growing worries that an escalation could hinder oil supplies and lead to higher insurance costs. Nearly four million barrels of oil are shipped daily through the Bab al-Mandab gateway to Europe, the United States and Asia. The UN last week said it took threats to shipping around Bab al-Mandeb "extremely seriously."

Source: [www.maritime-executive.com](http://www.maritime-executive.com), 11 October 2016

## **USS Detroit Warship lands in its namesake city**

-Benjamin Raven

DETROIT — The sixth U.S. Navy warship to bear Detroit's name arrived in its namesake city Friday afternoon, Oct. 14. Hundreds of people lined up in front of the GM Renaissance Center on Detroit's Riverfront to watch the ship make its way down the Detroit River between Belle Isle and Windsor, Ontario's shoreline. The ship made its way from Wisconsin and around the Great Lakes before docking in Detroit. USS Detroit's commissioning ceremony is set for Oct. 22 on the Riverwalk outside the Renaissance Center. Event space is full, and tickets are no longer available. Ship commissioning marks a vessel's official entrance into active duty. Robin Harkless, of Waterford, was in attendance for the warship's arrival because her son, Matthew Harkless U.S. Navy EM1, was on board the USS Detroit.

While she wasn't able to see her son, who has been in the Navy for six years, she said it was amazing to see the ship turn the corner and come into sight by Belle Isle. "It's just amazing to see these ships come in," she said while sitting down on a step in front of a ramp coming from the USS Detroit. "(You) just don't know it until you see it start to come in the distance." The USS Detroit's sponsor is Barbara Levin, wife of former longtime U.S. Sen. Carl Levin (D-Detroit). Its seal includes a winged tire, a pair of sharks, a nod to Detroit's automotive manufacturing past, as well as a partial depiction of the city flag.

After the commissioning ceremony, the USS Detroit will sail across the Detroit River to spend four days in Windsor, Ontario. This trip to the other side of the river will mark the first time a U.S. warship has visited another nation as its first international port of call, according to the ship's website. To keep up with the events honoring the ship, head to the USS Detroit Facebook page or scroll below for a rundown:

- The public is invited to 11 a.m. Sunday, Oct. 16 worship service at Mariners' Church, 170 E. Jefferson Ave.
- A celebration will be held to honor the commissioning of the USS Detroit and the "unique relationship" between Canada and the U.S. This will occur from 5 to 9 p.m. at the St. Clair College Centre for the Arts, 201 Riverside Drive in Windsor, Ontario. The

"International Super Chef Black Tie Dinner" will serve food from Michigan and Ontario, wins from Ontario and a combination of U.S. and Canadian-based chefs. The event costs \$158 U.S. and \$185 Canadian.

- "Veterans Day in the D" will kick off 11 a.m. Tuesday at Atwater Brewery. The estimated six-hour event is free to attend, but an RSVP is required.
- Public tours of the ship will take place from 1 to 5 p.m. Wednesday. Get in line and wait it out, as they will take 15-20 people at a time every 15 minutes for the tours. Cameras are allowed, bring a photo identifications, and leave the alcohol and weapons at home.

Source: [www.mlive.com](http://www.mlive.com), 14 October 2016

## **Hong Kong's Port seeks new role amid mainland China competition and decline in container throughput**

Hong Kong's geographical location and proximity to the mainland has given its sea freight business an advantage for more than a century. But while the city's status as a major sea freight centre is in decline, industry leaders are optimistic the trend can be reversed with the right policies to help promote the maritime business. Hong Kong's maritime and port industry made up 1.4 per cent of the city's GDP in 2014 and currently employs 2.5 per cent of the working population.

It is a major economic pillar that is beginning to weaken based on declining container throughput and the loss of its advantage as a shipping hub as the mainland continues to liberalise its trade and shipping policies. Hong Kong was the world's busiest container port from 1992 to 2004, but now stands in fifth place. Singapore led the rankings from 2005 until 2010, when it was overtaken by Shanghai. "[Hong Kong's port] has lost its purpose and is looking for a role," Stephen Davies, maritime historian and honorary University of Hong Kong professor said.

"As soon as China got its port act in gear, what Hong Kong had always traded on from 1841 and onwards, which was the fact that it wasn't China, simply disappeared. China can be its port a lot better than Hong Kong can be." Davies does not think the government took its waters and the port seriously and left it to business to decide how best to use the city's maritime assets. Now it is scrambling to stop the decline. "When ship breaking disappeared in Hong Kong because it can be done cheaper in Taiwan, the government was not supporting it," he said.

"You can see it when the dockyards disappeared in Hong Kong because shipbuilding was cheaper in Japan, and the government was not prepared to go to the length of the Japanese to subsidise. "The present dilemmas have arisen because Singapore was prepared to go the extra 15 miles to subsidise, encourage, [and] build Singapore as a shipping centre and Hong Kong was not. They woke up very late to this."

One of the government's responses to address the situation was to establish the Hong Kong Maritime and Port Board in April to study ways to "devise maritime and port-related strategies" and "create a maritime business-friendly environment" in the hope of reversing the downward sea freight trajectory. It is currently looking to enhance Hong Kong's port to "strengthen its competitiveness".

Some initiatives include deepening the Kwai Tsing container basin and its approach channel, better efficiency of land use around container terminals to accommodate future growth in transshipment and additional barge berths. The board is also organising its first Hong Kong Maritime Industry Week in November to try and attract trading partners to make Hong Kong their "preferred base" for maritime business. Apart from promotion, Hong Kong Shipowners Association managing director Arthur Bowring hoped the board would make policy changes to help the maritime industry.

"Policy changes [are needed in] maritime education training ... attracting people to the industry, adopting international legislation, increasing expertise within the various government departments and industries themselves, these are all very important," he said. In 2014, the government set up a HK\$100 million maritime and aviation training fund in an effort to "attract new blood and groom talent for the maritime and aviation sectors".

Hong Kong is no longer a direct shipment port and is now largely focusing on transshipment. However, shipping industry experts and academics agree that so long as the mainland maintains barriers to trade, Hong Kong will retain a role in maritime trade. As soon as the mainland decides to liberalise trade and cabotage rules, Hong Kong's sea freight business could be in for a rapid decline, leaving the city looking to develop a new role in global shipping. Free trade zones on the mainland threaten the city's transshipment business. Mainland carriers can use foreign-flagged ships for direct trade to and from home ports, rather than going through Hong Kong.

Hong Kong-based container shipping and logistics service giant Orient Overseas Container Line (OOCL) believes Hong Kong will still have a place in sea freight through maritime services – developing what is known as a maritime cluster. These include ship finance, management and insurance. "The strength of the maritime cluster will remain very important to Hong Kong's competitiveness in the future," a company spokesman



said. Bowring cited London as an example of a place which has lost much of its port business while retaining an “extremely strong” maritime services sector. Hong Kong has the same strengths in maritime services and will continue to have a presence, according to Bowring.

But Davies dismissed the optimism displayed by those in the industry: “Hong Kong blew the maritime cluster issue probably five years ago ... They left [building maritime services] too late” giving up its advantage to Singapore. Experts note that all blame should not be placed on the government and the shipping industry for the slowdown in the city’s port business. The global economic slowdown has also contributed to the weakness in Hong Kong’s container throughput.

“Throughput all over the world is down. Even Chinese exports are coming down because Chinese manufacturers are finding environmental and labour conditions such that they would rather relocate to Vietnam, Bangladesh and other places,” Bowring said. OOCL also cited the slowdown in the global economy and “rising costs in China’s manufacturing sector” as factors contributing to the decline in Hong Kong as a shipping and logistics hub. Innovations in autonomous shipping have made significant inroads recently, with Danish shipping giant Maersk and British engine maker Rolls-Royce taking the lead with “advanced autonomous waterborne applications”.

Davies said this was an area in which Hong Kong could invest. It did not have to be involved in actual ship construction, but could develop parts of a ship or even the software in Hong Kong, similar to Hongkong International Terminals’ port management software used throughout the world, he added. A spokesman for the Transport and Housing Bureau said the government was aware of the research into autonomous shipping and “will continue to monitor its development.”

Source: [www.scmp.com](http://www.scmp.com), 3 October 2016

## **India Slow to Expand Iran Port as China Races Ahead at Rival Hub**

-Golnar Motevalli

When the leaders of India, Iran and Afghanistan gathered in Tehran in the spring for a ceremony marking India's development of a strategic Iranian port, they recited Persian poetry and said their partnership would "alter the course of history." On a recent visit, roughly 13 years after India first agreed to develop the port of Chabahar, a single ship floated at the main jetty. Most of the cargo containers scattered in an asphalt lot bore the logo of the state-owned Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines. In an adjacent harbor, a dozen wooden dhows, or traditional fishing boats, bobbed in the water.

Months after the ceremony in May and pledges by India to inject \$500 million into the project, the much-heralded port of Chabahar remains a sleepy outpost – as well as a shadow of the Chinese-built port of Gwadar, 100 kilometers (62 miles) to the east across Iran's border with Pakistan. "What you're seeing is the problem with many of the Indian commitments abroad," said Sameer Patil, an analyst at Gateway House, a research organization in Mumbai. "Once a prime minister makes that commitment, the parties find it difficult to move the process forward. The Indian bureaucracy takes its sweet time."

Chabahar was supposed to be an easy win: India would bankroll a hub to rival the China-Pakistan partnership at Gwadar, Iran would get a major ocean port outside the Strait of Hormuz and spur growth in its poor eastern region, and Afghanistan would gain road and rail links to a deep-water port that could boost its war-ravaged economy. But more than a decade on, the strategic asset is languishing, even as China sinks \$45 billion into the China Pakistan Economic Corridor that winds down to Gwadar. "They should've given the contract to the Chinese," said Zheng Ke, a 37-year-old businessman from China, speaking in Persian at his supermarket in Chabahar's free trade zone as Iranian customers snapped up Chinese-made clothes and kitchen utensils and streamed through check-outs staffed by Chinese workers. "They'd get the port done in no time."

Despite the project's importance, Indians and Iranians haggled for two years over who would pay \$30 million of excise duties on port equipment imported into Iran, according to Iranian diplomat Hamid Mosadeghi. "The slowness comes from these small things," said Mosadeghi, who heads the economic section at Iran's embassy in New Delhi. "Both

sides want to expedite this.” For Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chabahar could aid his goals of integrating South Asia’s economies and boosting India’s stature in the region. However, the slow pace of its development has drawn criticism.

“With China and Pakistan developing Gwadar just a few kilometers away, India cannot afford either delay or inattention to this vital port,” said Shashi Tharoor, a lawmaker with India’s opposition Congress Party and chairman of a parliamentary committee on foreign affairs. Chabahar could be a linchpin for the region’s economy. It’s close to the western Indian ports of Kandla, Mundra and Mumbai and could help India’s farmers get cheaper access to fertilizers and other commodities from central Asia and beyond. “We are dependent substantially on urea, ammonia and fertilizers, and given Chabahar’s geographic proximity, the transport costs are negligible,” India’s ambassador to Iran, Saurabh Kumar, said in an interview in Tehran.

Chabahar is also crucial for land-locked Afghanistan. The deal includes a north-south railroad that could help the country exploit an estimated \$1 trillion of untapped mineral wealth and reduce its reliance on aid. India will invest \$85 million in equipment and lend \$150 million for the first phase, which includes two terminals and five jetties, according to Kumar. Transport ministers from Iran, India and Afghanistan met last week in New Delhi to assess progress. “We have not fallen behind in the Chabahar port development plans,” Iranian Transport Minister Abbas Akhoundi said after the meeting on Sept. 28. “This plan is being carried out at the appropriate speed.”

### *Geopolitical ‘Race’*

Chabahar may even benefit China. The country, which deepened trade ties with Iran after the U.S. and European Union tightened sanctions in 2012, could cash in on the gradual re-opening of the Islamic Republic’s \$400 billion economy. Beijing is also expanding its footprint elsewhere in the Gulf: A unit of China’s biggest shipping group, Cosco Shipping Co., signed a deal on Sept. 28 to build and operate a container terminal in the United Arab Emirates. “There is a race,” said Patil, the Gateway House analyst. “But the ground reality is that the Chinese commitments in the region are already up and running, while Indian’s proposals remain proposals.”

### *Islamic Militants*

For Iranians, the new investment can't come soon enough. Sanctions, which were eased in January, exacerbated poverty in Sistan-Baluchestan, Iran's poorest province, where security forces are fighting insurgents and face a threat from Islamic State militants across the border in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Once developed, Chabahar will be able to handle large cargo ships and will no longer need U.A.E. ports to act as intermediaries by off-loading goods on to smaller boats.

The project will also lessen Iran's vulnerability to possible disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, said Abdolrahim Kordi, deputy head of economic affairs at the Chabahar Free Trade Zone. If the Strait, a shipping bottleneck at the mouth of the Gulf, were to be blocked due to regional hostilities, Chabahar would be "the only point that can connect Iran to open seas," he said. At Zheng's supermarket overlooking the port, any payoff from Chabahar's development remains a distant prospect. "It'll bring more goods here of course, but who knows when it'll be done," Zheng said.

Source: [www.bloomberg.com](http://www.bloomberg.com), 5 October 2016

### **Patrol vessel delivery highlights improving India-Mauritius Security co-operation**

India has delivered the first of two 48 m fast patrol vessels to Mauritius. The patrol vessel programme, along with the introduction of 10 interceptor boats, is part of a sustained Indian effort to build security and influence across the Indian Ocean region. India's regional security outreach to countries bordering the Indian Ocean has been boosted by the delivery of the first of two India-built fast patrol vessels (FPVs) to the Mauritius Police Force National Coast Guard (NCG).

India's state-owned Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) handed over MCGS Victory (pennant CG 32) to the Mauritius Coast Guard on 26 September. According to the Mauritius Police Force (MPF), Victory is expected to reach Mauritius next month; delivery of the second vessel, Valiant, is expected in 2017.

The 48.14 m long Victory-class FPVs are a variant of a GSL in-house design developed for the Indian Coast Guard. Powered by triple waterjets, each driven by an MTU 16V4000 M90 diesel engine through a ZF 7600 gearbox, top speed is more than 35 kt. Range is more than 1,500 n miles, and endurance is seven days. The armament fit comprises a 30 mm CRN-91 gun mount with fire-control capability provided by an electro-optical director. In addition 12.7 mm heavy and 7.62 mm light machine guns are fitted.

According to GSL, even though the project faced some difficulties, including sourcing of steel, that resulted in a six-month delay, the vessel was delivered on time. "Despite all the challenges ... we have successfully delivered this ship as per [the] contractual schedule of September 2016, within 20 months of keel laying," noted GSL's head, Rear Admiral Shekhar Mittal, quoted in a GSL press release. The pair of FPVs (valued at USD41 million) and 10 recently inducted GSL-supplied 15.65 m fast interceptor boats (valued at USD6 million) were funded by a credit line from India's Export-Import Bank under the auspices of a long-standing India-Mauritius security co-operation effort.

Source: [www.janes.com](http://www.janes.com), 10 October 2016

### **Productivity, capacity upgrades drive growth at major Indian Ports**

Container volumes at India's major public ports expanded 6.32 percent year-over-year in the first fiscal half through September, a sign that productivity and capacity improvements via the government's Sagar Mala investments are beginning to produce results. The newest provisional port statistics collected by JOC.com show the country's 12 major ports together handled 4.35 million 20-foot-equivalent units in the first half, up from 4.09 million TEUs a year earlier.

Of that, Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust accounted for 2.26 million TEUs, up 0.8 percent from 2.24 million TEUs during April to September 2015, representing more than 50 percent of India's total containerized traffic via major ports. That modest growth indicates the largest public container handler is facing stiff competition from private terminals farther up the west coast, especially Adani Group-owned Mundra and Hazira, despite its ongoing aggressive steps to shore up productivity levels.

JNPT's productivity is showing a marked improvement because of those efforts. Statistics obtained by JOC.com show average turnaround time for a ship at the port during the first half was reduced to 2.01 days from 2.85 days in the same period last year, while average output per ship berth day climbed to 22,803 tonnes (25,136 tons) from 20,550 tonnes, respectively. In a notice to customers on Monday, JNPT said terminals processed 19,712 trucks and 22,748 gate transactions in September through its "inter-terminal truck transfer" procedure meant to speed drayage. On the direct delivery front, which has been drawing increasing shipper interest, volume hit a new high in September, at 6,904 TEUs. Chennai's first-half volume fell 7 percent to 748,000 TEUs from 804,000 TEUs in the same period last year.

The declining trend is a clear sign that cargo diversions from Chennai to nearby private terminals because of truck bottlenecks are continuing and that the measures rolled out by authorities to address shipper concerns are not working. JNPT and Chennai cumulatively handle about 75 percent of the containers passing through India's major ports. First-half container volumes at other major ports were as follows: Kolkata, up 17 percent from 325,000 TEUs to 380,000 TEUs; Tuticorin, or V.O. Chidambaranar, up 5 percent from 310,000 TEUs to 325,000 TEUs; and Visakhapatnam, jumping 132 percent from 134,000 TEUs to 311,000 TEUs, the latest data shows. DP World-operated Vallarpadam Terminal at Cochin Port continued its upward march as first-half throughput increased 20.5 percent year-over-year to 242,000 TEUs from 201,000 TEUs.

Source: [www.joc.com](http://www.joc.com), 10 October 2016

### **Large Cruise Ships in the Arctic Prompt calls for Regulation**

A surge in Arctic tourism is bringing ever bigger cruise ships to the formerly isolated, ice-bound region, prompting calls for a clamp-down to prevent Titanic-style accidents and the pollution of fragile eco-systems. Arctic nations should consider limiting the size of vessels and ban the use of heavy fuel oil in the region, industry players said, after a first luxury cruise ship sailed safely through Canada's Northwest Passage this summer. The route, which connects the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans via the Arctic, was once clogged with icebergs but is now ice-free in summer due to global warming.

With a minimum ticket price of \$19,755, the 1,700 passengers and crew on board the Crystal Serenity followed — in reverse — the route first navigated more than a century ago by Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen. They left Anchorage in Alaska on Aug. 15 and docked in New York on Sep 16. The ship’s operator, Crystal Cruises, says on its website it will repeat the voyage in 2017. It declined a request for comment when contacted by Reuters.

Two shipping executives expressed concern that the one-off trip could become a trend, citing worries over safety, risks to the environment and the impact on small communities, in an area where there is no port between Anchorage and Nuuk, in Greenland. “The Northwest Passage is thousands and thousands of nautical miles with absolutely nothing ... There is a need to discuss possible regulation,” said Tero Vauraste, the CEO of Arctia, a Finnish shipping firm specializing in icebreakers.

Were a ship to be in trouble in the Northwest Passage, there would be little authorities could do given the lack of infrastructure, he said. “So we must do everything we can do to prevent this,” said Vauraste, who is also vice-chair of the Arctic Economic Council, a regional forum for business cooperation between Arctic nations. Navigation in icy waters is made more difficult by poor satellite imagery. “An ice field might move at a speed of 4-5 knots, but a ship will receive a satellite picture of it that is 10-20 hours old,” said Vauraste. “We need better quality imagery.”

### *Heavy Oil*

Another concern is environmental. “Potentially, an accident involving a mega-ship could represent an environmental disaster,” said Daniel Skjeldam, CEO of Hurtigruten, a cruise ship operator in the Arctic and the Antarctic, whose biggest ships can accommodate 646 passengers. Cruise ships usually use heavy oil, a type of fuel that takes longer to break down in the event of a spill. The Crystal Serenity did not use heavy oil during its trip, its operator has said.

“Heavy oil in cold conditions is sticky and takes much longer time to break down so it has a prolonged effect on the environment,” said Marco Lambertini, director-general of World Wildlife Fund International. “If something happens at the beginning of winter, no cleanup can be done. Oil can get trapped under the ice and travel for a hundred kilometers,” he told Reuters. A U.N. polar code will come into effect in 2017 which

toughens demands on ship safety and pollution. It bans heavy fuel oil in the Antarctic, for instance, but merely encourages ships not to use it in the Arctic. “What I call for is stronger regulations coordinated between the Arctic nations,” Hurtigruten’s Skjeldam told Reuters. He suggested the size of ships should be limited, without specifying by which criteria, that the use of heavy oil be banned and shipping companies should aim to reduce their emissions by, for instance, using hybrid engines. Vauraste said an update of the Polar Code, addressing some of these issues, could be on the agenda for the Arctic Economic Council.

The impact of the ‘mega-ships’ on small arctic communities is also becoming a concern. Svalbard — an archipelago midway between Europe’s northernmost point and the North Pole — is experiencing a tourism boom, with the number of overnight stays by visitors rising 14 percent in July year-on-year to 18,000. “I stay home when the cruise ship tourists come. Too many people at the same time. It is really stressful,” said Fredric Froeberg, 37, a Swedish guide who runs excursions on snow scooters and boats from Longyearbyen, Svalbard’s main settlement, with around 2,160 inhabitants. “This place should not become too big. Otherwise it will become overexploited, like so many other places around the world. What is fantastic here is the nature.”

Source: [skift.com](http://skift.com), 10 October 2016





## MARINE ENVIRONMENT



### **Global trade slowdown to dampen PH Shipping volumes**

A slowdown in global trade and weak demand for Philippine exports will combine to dampen shipping volumes to and from the Philippines, which could be aggravated by problems in the international container-line industry triggered by the collapse of South Korean giant Hanjin Shipping Co. Ltd. The Asian Development Bank said in its Asian Development Outlook Update that among the threats to sustained economic growth for the Philippines this year would be weaker-than-expected demand from major markets for Philippine exports.

ADB raised the forecasts for the gross domestic product growth this year to 6.4 percent from its March projection of six percent. But for 2017, growth is seen to dip slightly to 6.2 percent although still above the previous forecast of 6.1 percent. The World Trade Organization also reduced its global trade forecast, warning that anti-globalization rhetoric and Brexit were pushing trade growth to its slowest pace since Britain's financial crisis.

The WTO said global trade was now estimated to expand by just 1.7 percent this year, compared with its April projection of 2.8 percent. The new figure is a far cry from the year-ago growth projection of 3.9 percent. The WTO said growth in trade had fallen to its slowest pace in around seven years when the global financial crisis hit. It warned that "creeping protectionism," coupled with lacking trade liberalization and perhaps the growing role of the digital economy and e-commerce might help explain the recent declining ratio of trade growth to GDP growth.

Think tank Economic Intelligence Unit said the fall of Hanjin Shipping, the world's seventh largest container line, was an evident sign that the industry had hit a crisis point, and a massive transition would be needed to turn profitability around. The Hanjin Shipping debacle for now has little effect on the country's trade since local exporters said they do not extensively use Hanjin vessels. But a study by SeaIntel cited

by the EIU report showed an instant capacity reduction of six to eight percent on trans-Pacific trade and a five to six percent reduction on the Asia-Europe trade as a result of the debacle. “Hanjin also has major stakes in the ports of Busan and Osaka, which will most likely see high-capacity disruptions, and impaired profitability, as these ports will lose ship calls from Hanjin,” according to the EIU report. It added ports had also denied access to Hanjin vessels, amid fears the company would not be able to pay the fees to dock and store its containers, leaving most of Hanjin’s ships stranded at sea. The company’s financial woes can be traced back to the financial crisis in 2008, which severely hampered global growth and trade and had a knock-on effect on the shipping industry, which lost an estimated \$15 billion, the report said.

Source: [manilastandardtoday.com](http://manilastandardtoday.com), 2 October 2016

### **Great Pacific Garbage Patch Reveals Ocean Pollution Level**

-Jose Buttner

An aerial survey has recently revealed the level of pollution in the great Pacific garbage patch. Researchers found that the area was hosting much more waste than they expected. The garbage has damaging effects on the marine species, as well as on water quality, and it is, of course, man’s fault. The great Pacific garbage patch is an area located in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Debris floats around as either large or small pieces. The small ones are a result of the decomposition process. Plastic bags and bottles, as well as parts of fishing gear, are invading the waters, giving marine species a hard time.

Specialists at the Ocean Cleanup decided to go on a reconnaissance mission above the Pacific. They used a C-130 Hercules plane for the flight. They could determine that there is a high level of pollution in the Pacific. Most of the waste material is plastic. The most damaged area is located in the North of the great Pacific garbage patch. The experts in charge of the survey stated that it was very hard for them to record the right level of pollution caused by garbage in the ocean. However, there is footage proving the impurity of the water. Massive waste concentrations were reported in the middle of the Pacific.

Water currents make it possible for garbage to travel in different parts of the ocean. However, researchers account for the increasing sizes of the great Pacific garbage patch. The waste in the water comes in different shapes and sizes. The large ones, such as abandoned fishing nets or traps endanger animals such as whales. There have recently been reported several cases of different whale species being entangled in fishing gear. It can cause then both external and internal injuries, leading to the animals' death. Small pieces of plastic and other items could be inhaled by fish or other animals. Such items shouldn't get into the wild ecosystems, as they created severe unbalance. Such results of the human actions lead to the decline of marine species.

Specialists explain that cleaning up the large pieces of garbage is easier than picking up the small ones. The aerial survey revealed that there is a significant rate of massive, solid items in the ocean. This is the adequate time to act before they start decomposing. Other reports from specialists suggest that immediate action must be taken. Some scientists estimate that the number of alien items will be bigger than that of fish. 2050 is the deadline for the action, so environmentalists must put strategies into action as soon as possible.

Source: [www.regaltribune.com](http://www.regaltribune.com), 7 October 2016

### **Marine Ecosystems at risk of further damage**

Marine ecosystems play a very important role in mitigating the impact of natural disasters but unsustainable socio-economic development has contributed to their further deterioration, experts have warned. Việt Nam is well-known for its diversified marine ecosystems with abundant and endemic varieties and genes of creatures. Its marine ecosystems includes 155,000 hectares of mangroves, 1,300 square kilometres of coral reefs, 500 sq.km of lagoons, 16,000ha of seaweed and algae ecosystems, intertidal areas and estuaries.

The Institute of Oceanography under the Việt Nam Academy of Science and Technology said the mangrove forest system plays an important role in protecting seashore, preventing winds and storms, reducing landslide and erosion. It also provides valuable wood products and is home to many kinds of valuable and rare bird species and

animals. However, the marine ecosystems have been diminishing remarkably and deteriorated over the past decades. In the past five decades, Việt Nam lost 67 per cent of total area of mangrove forest in comparison with 1943. During 1943-1990, the rate of forest lost was 3.266ha per year and the figure increased to 5.613ha per year by 2012.

The seagrass beds and coral reefs have also been diminishing over the last few decades. According to a survey released by the Natural Resources and Maritime Environment Institute in 2014, only 1 per cent of the 1,300 sq. km of coral reefs along the coastline is in good condition. The coral coverage fell sharply by 30 per cent in 1993-2004. The survey also found that the aquatic creature volume caught on every hectare of lagoon fell by 50 per cent in comparison with the last decade. The seaweed cover in the central coastal province of Khánh Hòa has shrunk by 80ha per annum.

Associate professor Nguyễn Chu Hồi from the Hà Nội National University said about 15-20 per cent of area of coral reefs were lost in the past 15 years, mostly areas inhabited by people such as Hạ Long Bay in northern Quảng Ninh Province and central coastal provinces. It would lead to the reduction of the biodiversity and quality of sea environment, he said. The recent seawater pollution off the four central coastal provinces of Hà Tĩnh, Quảng Bình, Quảng Trị and Thừa Thiên-Huế, which was caused by toxic wastewater released by a Taiwanese-owned steel company, had certain impact on the marine ecosystems, he said, adding that it took time for recovery.

The institute said increasing human population, which leads to a higher demand for ecosystem services, has put pressure on the maritime ecosystems. Human production activities, including natural resource overexploitation, unsustainable aquaculture and industrial production, and climate change have also been damaging maritime ecosystems. Human production activities, including natural resource overexploitation, unsustainable aquaculture and industrial production, and climate change have also been damaging maritime ecosystems. Việt Nam lies to the west of the East Sea and touches the sea in three directions, with a long coastline of over 3,200km and territorial sea of more than 1 million square kilometres, which is triple the area of its mainland.

The Prime Minister in 2010 approved the maritime protection area (MPA) development program, under which Việt Nam would have 16 MPAs with the total area of 169,617 ha by 2020 and at least 0.24 per cent of territorial waters belonging to MPAs, while 30 per

cent of every MPA area would be put under strict control. The Law on Marine and Island Resources and Environment, which was passed by the National Assembly last year, takes effective from July this year. It is expected to provide a new method of managing marine and island resources in order to promote effective and sustainable exploitation and use of these resources and protect the marine environment. – VNS

Source: [vietnamnews.vn](http://vietnamnews.vn), 7 October 2016

### **Sansha bans fishing, tourism to protect Dragon Hole**

-Liu Xiaoli

Sansha city in South China's Hainan province, the country's southernmost city, has banned fishing and tourism in and around the world's deepest blue hole as part of its efforts to protect the maritime environment in the South China Sea. Organizations and individuals are forbidden from the activities in Longdong—known as "Dragon Hole"—or within 1 nautical mile of the blue hole, according to a notice issued by the management committee of the Yongle Islands in Sansha. Other activities concerning the blue hole, such as scientific expeditions and environmental protection programs must be approved by the government, according to the notice.

The blue hole, a major coral reef, is more than 300 meters deep and deemed the deepest of its kind in the world. Blue holes are underwater sinkholes that appear darker blue in color the deeper the water inside gets. The notice on the Sansha government's website on Saturday is intended to help protect the blue hole and its neighboring coral reef ecosystem. The diameter of the sinkhole's top entrance measures about 130 meters; and the bottom measures 36 meters, according to Track Ocean, a private research organization whose research institute probed the sinkhole several times between August last year and June this year.

Yang Zuosheng, a professor at Ocean University of China in Qingdao, Shandong province, said the sinkhole, which is about 100 meters deeper than Dean's Blue Hole in the Bahamas, is of significant scientific value. According to Yang, the coral reef in the 300-meter-deep formation contains crucial information, accumulated over tens of

thousands of years, that researchers can study to discover how changes in global climate and sea level affect the environment of the local waters. A research program on the sinkhole was the first project to gain support from Sansha's special fund for maritime ecological protection, according to Hainan Daily. The Yongle Islands are part of the Xisha Islands. In July 2013, the Sansha government set up a management committee to administer the islands and their surrounding waters.

Guo Yong, deputy director of the committee, said the notice, which was issued on July 28, shows the importance Sansha attaches to the maritime environment. To restore the diversity of ocean life, the committee has invested more than 20 million yuan (\$3 million) and has released various species of young fish and sea cucumbers around the reef, Guo said.

Source: [www.chinadaily.com.cn](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn), 10 October 2016

## **Doing Laundry Can Be Deadly for Clams, Mollusks and Other Marine Animals**

-Rachel Kaufman

Everyone loves the feeling of clean clothes—except maybe sea animals. Each load of laundry you do may be pouring hundreds of thousands of tiny pollutants into the water, which are then ingested by clams, mollusks and other sea creatures around the world. Microfibers, or tiny bits of polyester and acrylic clothing less than 1/5 of an inch long, along with microplastics and microbeads—exfoliants found in beauty products—form when larger pieces of plastic break down. These tiny pollutants are among the most prevalent sources of marine pollution, and they may spell trouble for ocean and freshwater creatures. But a new study shows that there's hope: Some clothes, namely those made from acrylic, are much more polluting than others. Clothes made from synthetic materials are the main source of microfibers—and microfibers, while less well-known than microbeads, are far more prevalent. “Microfibers are actually the most prevalent type of microplastic that we’re seeing across the board,” says Katherine O’Reilly, a Ph.D. student at the University of Notre Dame. And those clothes, it turns out, can be hugely variable when it comes to how many fibers they shed. “Some fabrics

were releasing up to 3 times more fibers than others,” says Richard Thompson, a professor at Plymouth University in the U.K. and co-author of the new study, which was published online September 25 in the journal *Marine Pollution Bulletin*. “It does suggest that there are things manufacturers can do to reduce the numbers of fibers [released].”

For the new study, Thompson and Imogen Napper washed fabric samples of different types: acrylic, polyester and a polyester-cotton blend. Then, they filtered the washing machine’s wastewater to count the fibers. They found that acrylic cloth, found in clothes from sweaters to microfleece jackets, sheds fibers three to four times faster than the poly-cotton blend. For instance, if you washed 6 kilograms of the same fleece, 700,000 fibers per load of laundry could be dumped into the wastewater stream.

Some of those fibers are filtered out at a wastewater treatment plant, but others get through; one estimate is that 40 percent of fibers slip through a treatment plant to the open water. When they reach rivers, lakes or the ocean, they can be ingested by filter feeders like clams and mussels—and have devastating effects. “The simple act of ingesting microplastics can make animals feel full without giving them nutrition,” says O’Reilly. “They eat, but they starve.” Or, says NOAA scientist Sherry Lippiat, toxins and bacteria tend to accumulate on the plastic, which can then be ingested by the animals. “We’re really concerned about the association between plastics and these chemical contaminants, but we’re not sure how much of a source plastics are of these contaminants.” Neither Lippiat nor O’Reilly were involved in the current study.

There are still many unknowns when it comes to microplastics. For instance, scientists don't know whether these pollutants choke animals, though Lippiat calls it "a likely possibility." They also don't know how long microplastics stay in an animal or whether they will accumulate up the food chain—from clam to crab to a fish to human, for example. But it is known that they are ubiquitous, and they are not going away. “We’re finding it everywhere we’ve looked,” says Lippiat.

Indeed, microplastics have been found in rivers, lakes, at the bottom of the ocean and even in a remote lake in Mongolia. Says Thompson: “We need to recognize that plastics are a persistent pollutant. Even if tomorrow we could wave a magic wand and stop all pollution of plastics to the environment, we'd still see for decades an increase in the

plastic out there because of the fragmentation of the larger pieces that are out there ... While there's not cause for alarm right now, there might be if we continue with business as usual.”

The lesson, according to Thompson, is not that wastewater treatment plants should step up their game: that's not the point. “You've got to consider, what do you do with the sewage you captured?” Sewage sludge—the leftover “solids” from a wastewater plant, now full of tiny plastic particles, too—is landfilled, incinerated or treated and used as fertilizer. That means that in most cases, the microplastics captured in a filter will just escape into the environment again. Rather, he says, we need to address the problem at the source. “We're advocating that manufacturers take into account not just the appearance of the garment but also the longevity of the garment.” After all, a shirt that sheds fibers three times as quickly will wear out three times as quickly. Clothing manufacturer Patagonia, which funded a study into clothes and microplastics a few years ago, recently announced on its blog that it was taking a number of steps to minimize the problem.

The company said it was asking washing machine manufacturers to research how they could reduce shedding or trap fibers and “explor[ing] ways to integrate criteria to assess shedding of synthetic microfibers into ... new materials within our product line.” It also asked customers not to buy “what you don't need, because everything we make ... has an adverse impact on the planet.” Moves like that are encouraging to Thompson. “If we can move to products that are long lasting for the consumer, and if at the end of their lifetime the garment can be recycled, that would be the best of all.”

Source: [www.smithsonianmag.com](http://www.smithsonianmag.com), 13 October 2016





## GEOPOLITICS



### **US prepared ‘to fight’ in Russia, China Missile Defense Zones – Naval ops chief**

The US Navy is seemingly ready to conduct operations in areas regarded as no-go missile areas, said the US Chief of Naval Operations. Such defense missile zones can be found at Russia’s and China’s coastlines. This was announced by Admiral John Richardson during remarks made at the US Naval Institute – CSIS Maritime Security Dialogue. He said that from now on the US Navy is “*scaling down*” the term ‘A2/AD’ (anti-access/area denial) from its communications. Earlier, these areas were viewed as “an impenetrable keep out zone that forces can only enter at extreme peril to their existence, let alone their mission,” Richardson wrote in an article for the National Interest outlet.

“It’s a term bandied about pretty freely and lacks the precise definition it probably would benefit from, and that ambiguity sends a variety of signals,” he said on Tuesday. “We’ll no longer use the term A2/AD as a stand-alone acronym [sic] that can mean all things to all people or anything to anyone – we have to be better than that,” Richardson said. He went on to explain why the US military decided to ditch the reference. “Since different theaters present unique challenges, a ‘one size fits all’ term to describe the mission and the challenge creates confusion, not clarity. Instead, we will talk in specifics about our strategies and capabilities relative to those of our potential adversaries, within the specific context of geography, concepts, and technologies,” he said.

According to Richardson, the current understanding of the term simplifies the real state of things which is “far more complex” than lines on the map. The lines marking these zones used to show the limits of missile defense systems’ ranges. If the aircraft or an aircraft carrier crossed the ark, it was risking to be destroyed, he said It is noteworthy that such zones – at least, the majority of them – are located on the coastlines of Russia and China.

It would appear as if the US were prepared to take a risk to increase their presence in the no-go zones. “It's actually really hard to achieve a hit. It requires the completion of a really complex chain of events. The threats they are based on are not insurmountable, and can be managed, will be managed,” Richardson said. “Have no doubt, the US Navy is prepared to go wherever it needs to go, at any time, and stay there for as long as necessary in response to our leadership’s call to project our strategic influence,” he said.

Tensions have been running high over the US expansion. In June, Russia warned the US about American warships entering the Black Sea and “response measures” from Moscow that could follow. The USS Porter (DDG-78), armed with assault cruise missiles and an Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense System entered the Black Sea at the beginning of June. Another hotspot for the conflict is South Korea, where the US is determined to deploy the THAAD anti-missile system.

Beijing has repeatedly voiced strong objections to the deployment of the system, vowing to take the “necessary” steps to maintain a strategic power balance in the region. A week ago, however, the US said it will deploy the system to South Korea “as soon as possible.” In mid-September, Russia and China held joint drills, with their culmination off the coast of China’s southern Guangdong Province.

Source: [www.rt.com](http://www.rt.com), 5 October 2016

**Asia Pacific going through major Geopolitical shifts, difficult internal conditions: PM Lee**

- Linette Lim

TOKYO: The Asia Pacific region is entering a period where countries must navigate both major geopolitical shifts and difficult internal conditions, said Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong Under these challenging conditions, countries can only succeed by strengthening cooperation instead of turning inward, said Mr Lee, adding that this is especially important for key players like Japan, which influence the tone for the region. The Prime Minister was speaking at a special session of a conference on “The Future of Asia”, organised by Nikkei and the Japan Center for Economic Research. In his address,

he discussed China, Japan, and the US, laying out his view of the roles the world's top three economies play in Asia Pacific, and their relationship with each other.

### *China's new role in the World*

Pointing out that China is the currently biggest trading partner of Japan, and almost every ASEAN country, Mr Lee acknowledged that China's rise has contributed greatly to the prosperity of the world. But he noted that China's rise also requires every country to make major adjustments, and this calls for restraint and wisdom by all sides, adding that "such a major shift in the strategic balance will not happen effortlessly". "China itself has to adjust to its new role in the world, and take on new responsibilities as an emerging major power. China has started to do some of this, as shown by China's growing contributions to UN peacekeeping operations, and their early ratification of the Paris Agreement on climate change," said Mr Lee.

"At the same time, China should be mindful of the natural unease and apprehension that its rapid rise elicits in its neighbours and other powers. It should act in such a way as to demonstrate that it is committed to building win-win relationships with other countries, and that while it seeks to revise existing frameworks and rules, it is not about to overturn the established international order which it has itself benefited from."

### *Implications for smaller countries, Major Powers*

Smaller countries will have to take the policies and interests of an emerging major player more into their calculations, while other major powers should accommodate the legitimate interests of a growing China, according to Mr Lee. Smaller countries like Singapore, he said, can benefit from new opportunities in trade and economic cooperation with China, for example through the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the "One Belt, One Road" initiatives. Meanwhile, other major powers should accommodate the legitimate interests of a growing China.

"China wants more influence over global developments, like other major powers. It will increase its contributions to international cooperation, in accordance with its capabilities and resources and interests, and in the hope of having more say at institutions such as the UN, IMF and World Bank," he said, adding that these

aspirations need to be recognised and given due weight and consideration by the other powers.

### *External Peace and Stability is in China's interest*

Turning to regional disputes, Mr Lee said that these have to be expected because each country has its own national interests to protect. He cited the territorial and maritime disputes in the South China Sea and the East China Sea as an example. But all sides have a vested interest in reaching a new and workable balance, and in minimising conflict, he said, noting that if countries fail to work together, they are not just losing opportunities to prosper together, but are also putting at serious risk all that they have achieved.

He added that ultimately, a stable external environment is eminently in China's interest. "China's prosperity depends on other countries too. Despite its size, China is not self-sufficient, and cannot be. On its own, minus access to world markets, foreign technology or MNC investments, China will be much poorer off. Furthermore, external peace and stability will allow China to focus on its domestic challenges, which are considerable," he said.

### *China faces serious Domestic Challenges*

China's present challenges are pressing, and will involve difficult trade-offs and risks, noted Mr Lee. "The low wage, export-driven model of growth is reaching its limits. The environmental impact has become enormous. There are growing demands to improve public services, and the population is rapidly ageing. Tackling these requires China to address fundamental issues like economic restructuring, social reform, political evolution," he said.

"We therefore cannot extrapolate from the last 30 years of China's transformation, and assume another 30 years of equally spectacular change. Instead we should see China as a country with a very successful economy, but one which also has its share of challenges and constraints, like everybody else. Its outlook is promising, but its path to continued success is not a linear one."

Mr Lee also pointed out that Chinese leaders have realistically acknowledged that the country has entered a “new norm”. “They are clearly mindful of the challenges ahead, but appear determined and confident to tackle the structural, social and economic changes that China needs to achieve its growth objectives,” he said. “We certainly hope that China will succeed. This is because a stable and prosperous China conscious of its weight and responsibilities, moving forward on a path of peaceful development, will greatly benefit the Asia Pacific, and bode well for the world.”

### *Where does Japan fit in?*

Against the current backdrop, Mr Lee said he believes Japan has an important role to play. He expressed his hope for Japan to succeed in reinvigorating its economy, highlighting that an “economically vigorous Japan is a precondition for sustaining an active role in the Asia Pacific”. “Japan needs not only domestic reforms, but also to maintain an outward orientation, engaging with the world,” said Mr Lee.

“In a globalised world, countries succeed not just through their own capabilities, but by understanding other countries and cultures, interacting with them, and absorbing talent and ideas from others,” he noted, adding that in recent decades, the number of Japanese students in Ivy League colleges in the US has gone down, while the number of Korean and Chinese students has gone up.

He observed that because Japan does not have the advantage of language on its side, it needs to make a greater effort to expose its people to the world, especially the young. “If more young Japanese can be exposed to study abroad with the best and brightest from around the world, and then integrated back into Japanese society, bringing with them different perspectives and approaches, this can only enrich and invigorate Japan. Indeed, this is what Japan did in the Meiji Restoration,” he added.

According to Mr Lee, another avenue to strengthen Japan’s outward orientation is through free trade, and this is one reason the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is such an important initiative for Japan. “We naturally hope that the TPP clears the Diet... whatever happens in the US. Japan’s decision carries weight, because it is the second largest economy in the TPP-12 and the third largest in the world. We should also welcome China to join the TPP eventually, for the TPP is a pathway to free trade in the Asia Pacific,” he said.

Mr Lee also talked about his hope for Japan to continue to play an active and constructive role in Asia, especially Southeast Asia. “In 1977, Prime Minister Fukuda stated the Fukuda Doctrine, committing Japan to peace, and to cooperating as an equal partner of the ASEAN group and ASEAN member countries. This was at a crucial moment in ASEAN’s development. The Vietnam War had just ended, and for many ASEAN countries, the future looked extremely uncertain. Japan’s economy was then growing vigorously,” he said, adding that the Fukuda Doctrine and Japanese foreign direct investments made a tremendous impact on Asian growth. “But after 1990, as Japan experienced protracted economic troubles, your attention understandably turned to domestic matters,” said the Prime Minister, acknowledging that in spite of the fact, Japan remains an important player with great influence.

#### *Japan’s relationship with China, Us*

Mr Lee also said he wanted to see Japan have stable and peaceful relations with its neighbours and big powers, in particular with China and the US. “We are fortunate that Northeast Asia has been at peace - or at least has not been at war - since the Korean War ended more than 60 years ago. But if the peace is shaken, either because territorial disputes escalate out of control, or because tensions on the Korean peninsula destabilise the region, it will be big trouble. All the issues at stake in the various disputes will not be worth the price of war,” he said.

“Till today, China and Japan still have differences, including over the Senkakus or Diaoyu islands. But I hope both countries will work together to manage the disputes and also to pursue opportunities, and not see the relationship as a zero-sum game.” He added that being simultaneously competitive and cooperative, the Japan-China relationship will require effort and accommodation on both sides. “Therefore, I welcome the recent meeting between President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Abe on the sideline of the G20 Summit in Hangzhou. Direct communication is the first step towards mutual understanding and resolution of differences. If both China and Japan work hard at it and avoid mishaps, both will save themselves a lot of problems, and the region will heave an enormous collective sigh of relief. He expressed hope that Japan will maintain its strong links with the US.

“The US-Japan Security Alliance has played an important role since the war. The alliance continues to be a cornerstone of regional stability, because it anchors the US in the region, and restrains countries in Northeast Asia from escalating their disputes,” he noted, adding that US nuclear umbrella “mitigates the risk that Japan may be forced to respond to North Korea's militarisation and nuclear programme, with unforeseeable and dangerous consequences”.

But a military alliance does not exist independent of the overall relationship, he cautioned. “For the US-Japan Security Alliance to endure, there must also be shared and growing interest and partnership between the US and Japan. That is why the TPP is strategically important. It will deepen US engagement with Japan and the region. In turn, America’s continued interest in Asia will enhance Asia’s security and stability, and provide the basis for all countries in the region to grow in peace.”

“If Japan can maintain good relations with your neighbours and the powers, it will make it easier for Japan to advance PM Abe’s Proactive Contribution to Peace policy and also Japan’s Legislation for Peace and Security, within the context of the US-Japan Security Alliance,” he added. “Singapore supports these initiatives, which call for an inclusive and rules-based regional architecture, and will enable Japan to play a larger role in regional and global affairs.”

Source:[www.channelnewsasia.com](http://www.channelnewsasia.com), 7 October 2016

### **France calls for its own “pivot to Asia” amid US war drive against China**

-Kumaran Ira

In pursuit of reactionary financial and strategic objectives in the Asia-Pacific, French imperialism is announcing its ambitions to boost its military deployments to this region. This was detailed in a June report, “France and Security in the Asia-Pacific,” presented by French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian at the International Institute for Strategic Studies’ Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore in June. It is part of an updated version of the 2015 Military Programming Law, stipulating that Paris must invest in major upgrades of its military capabilities to develop its influence in Asia.

In the foreword, Le Drian wrote, “The evolution of the strategic balances has strongly accelerated in Asia as well as in the Indo-Pacific. In a nutshell, the geopolitical entity comprising Asia and the Indo-Pacific, which is a seat of economic dynamism, demographic growth and technological innovation, represents a source of overall prosperity, exposed to vulnerabilities. Securing this area is thus essential, within the framework of a rules-based order based on dialogue and the respect of multilaterally set rules.” The paper highlights the Asia-Pacific’s strategic importance for Paris, declaring, “France has started to re-balance its strategic centre of gravity towards the Indo-Pacific, where it is a neighbouring power.” France has many island possessions in the Pacific and Indian oceans. It aims to develop these as springboards for naval influence. It already participates in the QUAD (Quadrilateral Defence coordination group) planning Pacific island security policy with the United States, Australia and New Zealand.

French strategists have been formulating this policy for years, since the Obama administration announced its “pivot to Asia” in 2011 to encircle China and subjugate Beijing to US interests. An examination of Le Drian’s report makes clear the financial interests underlying French plans for a major military escalation in Asia. The report identifies Asia as the world’s centre of economic growth and a key market for French corporations and investors, noting that in 2012, French Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) stocks in the Asia-Pacific already amounted to US\$75 billion.

France’s yearly trade deficit with China is around €25-35 billion, France’s largest trade deficit with any single country. French and international corporations use China and the entire Asia-Pacific to provide cheap consumer goods to French and European markets, relying in the final analysis on US and European military influence to dictate profitable terms to Asian suppliers. French imperialism also views China as a potential competitor in France’s former colonial empire in Africa, where it still maintains a major political and military presence. Since 2011, Paris has launched a series of wars and military interventions—in Libya, Ivory Coast and the Central African Republic—targeting regimes that developed economic ties with China and threatened to cut across French neo-colonial interests. In the pursuit of these interests, President François Hollande’s Socialist Party (PS) government aligned itself with the US “pivot to Asia,” even as Washington stoked a confrontation with Beijing in the South China Sea that could trigger a conflict between the two nuclear-armed powers.



France's 2013 military White Paper declared, "[T]he equilibrium in East Asia has been profoundly modified by the rising power of China. ... Reinforcing America's military presence in the region can contribute to controlling tensions in Asia." It added, "France would, in the event of an open crisis, make a political and military contribution at the appropriate level." At a 2013 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit, then foreign minister Laurent Fabius declared, "France has also, itself, launched its own 'pivot.' Not to try to be in style, but because France wants to be where the world of tomorrow is being built. And the Asia-Pacific will evidently be at the heart of the 21st century."

Such plans to assert French military interests in Asia have ominous implications. It takes place amid a resurgence of all the imperialist powers' neo-colonial ambitions, most clearly shown by the US-European war drive in Africa and the Middle East. In Asia, French imperialism is returning to the scene of some of its most horrific crimes. France was a brutal colonial power in Southeast Asia, and the 1946-1954 French Indochina war cost hundreds of thousands of lives before French imperialism was forced to abandon the region by its humiliating defeat at Dien Bien Phu.

Paris's attempt to embark on military escalation in Asia is bound up with the intractable crisis of European and world capitalism. With the European Union (EU) mired in a deep economic slump, and pursuing a bankrupt policy of deep austerity against the working class combined with trillion-euro handouts to the banks, Paris is desperately seeking new targets for financial plunder. The French Institute for International Relations (IFRI) think tank wrote, "The French 'pivot' to Asia serves the principal objective of the Hollande administration, which is to find sources of economic growth that no longer exist in Europe." It added, "For French parliamentarians, the current economic context creates an 'Asian imperative for France,' which cannot be ignored on pain of 'missing a strategic turn.'"

Claims that a French "pivot" to Asia would produce economic benefits are militarist lies, however. A French "pivot" would require a massive increase in military spending and, thus, corresponding social cuts aimed at workers. The IFRI wrote, "Moreover, considering a 'pivot' to Asia when budgetary constraints limit the French military's power projection capacities seems strange. Despite voluntarist speeches with ambitious

objectives, the future of French foreign policy in Asia seems rather uncertain in this context.”

An Asian “pivot” by France or other European powers would intensify the contradictions of world capitalism, which already threaten to explode into a world war between nuclear-armed powers. Nor is it clear, in the longer term, against whom such a “pivot” would be waged—China, some other coalition of Asian powers, or even the United States. France’s Asia policy is shot through with contradictions. On the one hand, it has developed military ties with allies of the US “pivot” to Asia—including India, Australia and Japan—with major arms sales to India and Australia. On the other, while tacitly backing the US war drive against China, it has developed economic ties with Beijing together with other European powers. Last year, it defied US requests and, like all the other major EU powers, joined Beijing’s Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

The AIIB is designed to invest in China’s Silk Road Economic Belt and “One Belt, One Road” (OBOR) initiative, which involves up to \$1.4 trillion in rail and road infrastructure to create a rapid-transit overland route from China across Russia, Central Asia, and the Middle East to Europe. The OBOR plan was a response to the US “pivot,” which blocked Chinese influence in trade routes in the Indian and Pacific Oceans vital for the security of Chinese energy imports from the Middle East. The Brexit has sharpened such strategic rivalries between the EU and Washington. Since Britain voted to leave the EU, France and Germany have pushed to create an independent EU military that would effectively rival the NATO alliance between the US, Canada, and the European imperialist powers—a move long opposed by Washington and London.

Source: [www.wsws.org](http://www.wsws.org), 10 october 2016

## **Japan underscores ‘Comprehensive Partnership’ with naval squadron visit Special Japanese envoy in Colombo**

-Shamindra Ferdinando

Rear Admiral (RA) Hidetoshi Iwasaki, Commander of the training squadron of the Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force (JMSDF) explained its growing overseas role in the wake of Japanese parliament authorizing such deployments last year. JMSDF came into being in 1945 following the dissolution of the Imperial Japanese Navy the same year. RA Iwasaki was responding to a query by The Island on board JS Kashima of the training squadron at the Colombo harbour on Sunday late afternoon. Asked for a clarification as regards Japanese military role in Asia in support of the US as well as joint naval cooperation among the US, Japan and India in response to growing Chinese military capability, RA Iwasaki discussed the circumstances under which Japanese Self Defence Forces could be deployed for overseas missions. Naval veteran said that they in accordance with overall strategy, the Japanese Maritime Self Defence Forces and the US Navy used same type of ships, equipment et al.

JMSDF in 2015 joined annual US-India Malabar exercises in the Bay of Bengal. In March this year, US announced joint naval exercises involving JMSDF and India off the northern Philippines, near the South China Sea. Along with JS Kashima, two other vessels, JS Asagiri and JS Setoyuki also of the training squadron arrived in Colombo over the weekend. The visit takes place in the wake of Japan and Sri Lanka reaching agreement on ‘Comprehensive Partnership’ in Oct 2015. The change of government in January 2015 paved the way for ‘Comprehensive Partnership’ and growing US-Sri Lanka relationship. Recently US embassy spokesperson told The Island that Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement (ACSA) with Sri Lanka would be extended.

RA Iwasaki expressed surprise that Sri Lankan media had never been invited on board visiting Japanese warships. In respect of parliamentary authorization for deployment of Japanese forces overseas, RA Iwasaki emphasized Japan would closely examine each situation before such a mission was undertaken. RA Iwasaki recalled Japanese naval deployment in support of US-led efforts in the wake of 9/11 Al Qaeda attacks on the US as well as the war in the Gulf 25 years ago. Having briefly explained the Japanese ‘mine sweeping’ mission 25 years ago, RA Iwasaki said that they returned home via Colombo

following the completion of the task. "I was here in Oct. 1991. This is my second visit," RA Iwasaki, who had been the Commanding Officer of JS Mineyuki, Commander, Escort Division 5 and Commander Escort Division 2 said.

Dr. Hiroto Izumi, visiting Special Advisor to the Japanese Prime Minister also joined a reception on board JS Kashima thereby underscoring the importance of Japanese naval visit. Dr. Izumi is in Colombo (Oct 8-11) to participate at the first Japan-Sri Lanka Joint Committee meeting meant to implement the 'Comprehensive Partnership.' Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera, Defence Secretary Karunasena Hettiarachchi and Army Commander L. Gen. Crishanthe De Silva were among the invitees. Addressing the media, RA Iwasaki said that approximately 190 newly commissioned officers were on board the training squadron vessels. "They are the future of the Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force."

RA Iwasaki explained approximately 31,000 nautical mile route taken by the training squadron over a period of 169 days (May 20 -Nov 4, 2016) covering 13 countries and 16 ports. The squadron arrived in Colombo on Oct 9 from Mombasa, Kenya. The squadron is scheduled to leave on Oct 12 for the Philippines for a four-day visit commencing Oct 24. RA Iwasaki also explained the North Korean threat not only to Japan but other countries as well in the wake of heightened NK military activity. Commenting on the situation in Sri Lanka, the Japanese RA referred to the successful conclusion of the war against the LTTE in May 2009. The top spokesperson also discussed ongoing anti-piracy operations involving maritime forces of several countries, strategic positioning of Sri Lanka and the Indian fleet visiting Japan.

Source: [www.island.lk](http://www.island.lk), 10 october 2016

## **China-Nepal meet turns into a trilateral session after Modi drops in**

-Jayanth Jacob

A meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Nepal's Prime Minister Prachanda on the sidelines of a BRICS dinner turned into an impromptu trilateral when Prime Minister Narendra Modi dropped by and spent more than 20 minutes with the two leaders. The incidence raised eyebrows as it is unusual for a scheduled bilateral meeting to go this way. It wasn't immediately clear why Modi joined the session. Officials familiar with the development said Prachanda was waiting for the Brazilian delegation to move before he could leave the venue and Xi chose to give him company. That is when Modi joined in, said an official on the condition of anonymity. Prachanda's son, Prakash Dahal, posted several photographs of the meeting on his Facebook page, which was quickly picked up by the social media. Dahal described the meeting as "coincidental" Writing in Nepali, he said, "with the help of right support from these major countries, Nepal's prosperity is possible".

India and China compete to grow their influence in Nepal. Wedged between the giant Asian neighbours, the Himalayan nation is of strategic interest to both India and China. Xi was supposed to visit Nepal on his way to the BRICS summit, but the plan was dropped after a regime change in Kathmandu in August saw Prachanda replacing KP Oli, who was regarded as a closer ally of Beijing. After coming to power, Prachanda chose India as the destination for his first foreign visit last month.

Source: [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 16 October 2016