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ASKET and PCA Maritime are collaborating in the fight against Illegal Weapons sharing in the Indian Ocean

ASKET and PCA Maritime are collaborating in a new venture to further support Legal Compliance amongst Private Maritime Security Companies by the Monitoring of Weapons in the Indian Ocean. Working together, ASKET and PCA Maritime have developed a process that provides much greater certainty that a PMSC is using only weapons licenced to that company, with appropriate EUCs in place, thus ensuring compliance and eradicating liability for the ship operator and flag State. The ASKET and PCA Maritime procedure allows flag States to ensure the validity of the a PMSCs EUCs prior to contractual agreement via our newly developed database. Weapons Monitoring and Equipment Checking has been a standard service to our shipping clients since ASKET first began to broker transits in 2013, during this time we have uncovered various illegal practices including Weapons Sharing and Renting, and breaking of UN Sanctions, for example a case in Sudan which would put the vessel owners at risk of and likely invalidate insurances.

A UK Company was also removed from our approved providers list as they were knowingly taking UK Licenced weapons into Sudan which is a UN Embargoed country, this practice saved them money as they should have disembarked and reembarked in the Red Sea before the vessel entered port. putting the vessel at risk of detention and likely invalidating the insurances. Through the improved secure data base the ASKET Compliance team in cooperation with PCA Maritime not only monitors Weapons and Equipment movements on a transit by transit basis, but also provides oversight on other issues such as Floating Armouries usage, equipment suitability and the competency of individual PCASP. In BIMCO's updated GUARDCON guidance notes issued on 1st November 2016 the emphasis for validating End User Certificates (EUC) is placed on flag States: "ship's flag state needs to see the EUC and verify its authenticity prior to issuing letters of authority (to allow the ship to have the weapons on board). Owners should be aware that this is a legal obligation on flag states and that they should be sighting and verifying EUCs as a matter of routine. The consequences for owners whose flag state fails to verify the authenticity of firearms EUCs before issuing letters of authority could mean significant delays to the ship or even detentions.

Source: www.asket.co.uk, 2 February 2017

Lankan Navy arrests five Tamil Nadu fishermen

Five Tamil Nadu fishermen were arrested and their boat impounded by the Sri Lankan Navy for allegedly fishing in their territorial waters, fisheries department official said on Thursday. The incident occurred last night when five fishermen from Jegadapattinam in Pudukottai district were fishing near Neduntheevu and were rounded up by the Lankan Navy and taken to Jaffna in the island nation, Pudukottai district fisheries department, Assistant Director Sekar said.

Meanwhile, over 3,500 fishermen in 625 boats from this island town had ventured into the sea on Wednesday and were fishing off Katchatheevu when the Lankan naval men came and snapped the fishing nets of 25 fishing boats forcing all of them to return to the shore without catch, this morning, Rameswaram Fishermen Association President S Emerite said. On January 8, 10 fishermen from Ramanathapuram and Pudukottai districts were arrested and their boats impounded by the Sri Lankan Navy for allegedly fishing in their territorial waters.

Source: indianexpress.com, 2 February 2017

US destroyer enters Black Sea for Naval Drills & ensuring 'Maritime Security'

The US guided missile destroyer, the USS Porter, has entered the Black Sea citing "maritime security," and to participate in multinational Sea Shield drills, the US navy has announced. The vessel "entered the Black Sea, Feb. 2, 2017, in order to conduct maritime security operations and enhance capability and interoperability *with allies and partners in the region*," a statement on the website of the US Sixth fleet reads. The 6th fleet, which the USS Porter is assigned to, is the US Navy's command for Europe and Africa headquartered in Naples, Italy. While in the Black Sea, the ship is set to take part in the annual international drills, code-named Sea Shield and led by Romania. This year's war games involve nearly 3,000 military personnel from Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, the US, Canada, Spain and Ukraine. During the large-scale drills, the multinational force will polish its joint naval tactics as well as information sharing.

“Porter has routinely operated in the Black Sea over the past few years, demonstrating our continued commitment to security and stability in the region,” the vessel’s captain, commander Andria Slough, said. This is the Porter’s second visit to the Black Sea. The ship sailed into the area in June last year, stating similar goals: countering the alleged “Russian threat.” As the US, does not border the Black Sea, it can’t keep ships in the region for more than 21 days at a time under the terms of the 1936 Montreux Convention regulating the transit of warships through the twin straits controlled by Turkey. The Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu said Moscow is prepared for any eventuality. “We hope that the drills will be conducted in the safest possible environment without challenges towards the Russian Federation. In any case, we are ready for such challenges,” Shoigu stressed. The US navy has been sending its warships on a rotational basis to the Black Sea since 2014, following the anti-government uprising in Ukraine and subsequent ousting of President Victor Yanukovich, which caused a conflict in the east of the country.

Source: www.rt.com, 3 February 2017

Nigeria seeks to enact anti-piracy law for Maritime Security

Nigeria is seeking to enact an anti-piracy law to reduce the activities of pirates and other maritime offenders in the country, an official said Monday. When enacted, the West African nation will be the first African country to have a dedicated anti-piracy law, said Dakuku Peterside, director-general of the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA). Peterside told reporters in Port Harcourt, Nigeria's oil hub and the capital of the southeastern state of Rivers, that the agency is now pushing for quick passage of the executive bill.

The draft has already been forwarded to the federal ministry of justice, he said. According to the official, the Nigerian government has been working to sanitize and strengthen the maritime sector for economic growth. He said by this approach, Nigeria would raise the bar on surveillance and intelligence in the Nigerian waters.

Source: www.chinafrica.cn, 6 February 2017

‘Maritime Security to be used as Weapon against Terrorism’

LAHORE: Governor Rafique Rajwana said on Saturday that maritime security will prove to be a strong weapon against terrorism. Speaking at a maritime awareness seminar at Aiwan-i-Iqbal here, the governor said the organisation of multinational naval exercise would promote a positive image of the country and provide a platform for participating nations to come closer to each other. It would also make the country’s defence invincible. Russia becoming part of the naval exercise was a welcome sign, he added. Punjab School Education Minister Rana Mashhood Ahmad said that Pakistan enjoyed a strategic location in South Asia that made it the most important country in the region. “Seaports, neighbouring sea and mountains have tremendous economic and military potential and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has enhanced naval significance of the country,” he said, adding that there was a need to develop best human resource through the Pakistan Marine Academy and other institutions.

The minister said Gwadar was a naval gateway of Pakistan and it would herald prosperity in Pakistan. “The CPEC will benefit not only Pakistan, but also Central Asia and other countries. The CPEC has given new importance to Pakistan as our seaside carries tremendous economic potential, which can benefit Pakistan in a number of ways.” Commodore Akbar Naqi said the merchant navy was backbone of Pakistan’s economy as 90 per cent of energy- and trade-related activities were carried out through sea routes. Pakistan Marine Academy alumni could easily get employment in Pakistan National Shipping Corporation and other companies. He further said that the completion of CPEC would provide tremendous job opportunities for the people of Gwadar. Lahore Mayor Mubashir Javed said economy was the priority of nations and CPEC would develop a new economic potential for the country.

Source: www.dawn.com, 12 February 2017

US highlights Sri Lanka’s strategic location: Seeks ensure Maritime Security

The Trump administration’s newly-appointed Under-Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy Bruce Wharton addressing Sri Lanka’s 69th Independence Day celebration at Sri Lanka embassy Washington underscored the South Asian nation’s strategic

location in the Asia-Pacific region saying “Sri Lanka can become a leader to ensure maritime security throughout the (Asian) region.”

In justifying Sri Lanka’s importance to ensure maritime security, Ambassador Wharton said “Sri Lanka boasts” itself as “one of the most strategic maritime locations in the entire Indo-Pacific: at the nautical crossroads of Africa, South Asia, and East Asia, with the Strait of Hormuz to its west and the Strait of Malacca to its east. Forty percent of all seaborne oil passes through the former and half the world’s merchant fleet capacity sails through the latter, making the sea lanes off of Sri Lanka’s southern coast some of the world’s most important economic arteries.” He reminded that the U.S. Department of State “launched the Partnership Dialogue last year, which allows us to cooperate like never before on issues such as governance, human rights, economic development, women’s empowerment, clean energy, security, and the environment.”

He then said “All of this cooperation wouldn’t be possible without the democratic progress Sri Lanka has made and its renewed commitment to reconciliation, accountable government, and freedom of expression.” Having known that the United States imports 23% of Sri Lanka’s total exports and that the trade deficit is in Sri Lanka’s favor, Under-Secretary Bruce Wharton remarked “In the 21st century, a country’s most important economic asset is its people, and Sri Lanka can harness its ambitious and entrepreneurial population to achieve great things. That’s why the United States is supporting Sri Lanka’s small- and medium-sized enterprises, helping to create jobs, promote investment, and improve the business climate. And this work isn’t just good for Sri Lanka; it’s also good for our economy here, because a larger and wealthier Sri Lankan middle class means more customers for U.S. products and services.”

Associated with the under-secretary of state were Congressman Robert Aderholt of Alabama, Chairman of Sri Lanka Caucus, Congressman David Price of North Carolina, Congressman Ted Yoho of Florida and Congressman Thomas Garrett of Virginia. Sri Lanka Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam in his opening address reminded his audience “Having seen the end of violent conflict in May 2009, and having elected into Office, a National Unity Government in 2015, the Sri Lankan people now look to the future with a renewed sense of hope, and commitment to consolidate peace and reconciliation, while striving for equitable economic development.”

Sri Lanka ambassador further said “The United States of America, in keeping with its deep-rooted democratic traditions, has just elected a new President, who assumed Office less than a month ago. The leaders of our country look forward to working with the new US Administration to build on the exponential progress of our multi-faceted bilateral relationship, nurtured especially during the last two years, based on our shared commitment to citizens’ rights for freedom and justice. “The high-level Partnership Dialogue between Sri Lanka and the United States, that was initiated last year, is an important platform to advance our common interests, including promoting regional stability and global security, that is vital for sustained economic growth, world-wide. “Our development partnership reached new heights when Sri Lanka was selected for a Compact Programme by the Millennium Challenge Corporation, last December. “Our common commitment to strengthen democratic governance and the rule of law, as well as our multi-religious, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural values, continue to draw us together and promote our ties at all levels.”

Mr. Kariyawasam highlighted the importance of US-Sri Lanka relations: “in thanking the leaders, officials, and people of the United States of America, who have toiled hard over the years to strengthen the relationship between our two countries, elevating our partnership to unprecedented heights; and in wishing the current leaders and the people of our two countries, the strength, understanding, commitment and wisdom to persevere, overcoming all challenges that may come our way, to advance our friendship and partnership in all its manifestations, for the peace, security and prosperity of both our nations.”

Source: www.asiantribune.com, 12 February 2017

Oil Theft: RSG promises Navy 10 Gun Boats

Jimitota Onoyume

PORT HARCOURT- Chief of Naval Staff, CNS, Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ibas has happed on the need for good welfare of Naval personnel in the country, saying it improves their capacity to fight oil theft and other maritime security challenges. Speaking at the commissioning of 120 tastefully finished rooms built for ratings at the Nigerian Navy Ship, Pathfinder, Port Harcourt the CNS, reaffirmed his commitment to provision of

decent accommodation for personnel. “Provision of decent accommodation for personnel is not considered a luxury rather an obligation to which I remain committed. “, he said. Governor of Rivers state, Nyesom Wike, who commissioned the six blocks of 120 rooms commended the Navy for keeping their environment clean, promising that the state government will deliver ten gun boats to the Navy to enhance their maritime security operations in the state. While appealing to other states to support the Navy with gun boats for their operations Wike enjoined the security body to ensure the gun boats were deployed for security of the territorial waters around the state. “The ten gun boats which we said we will give, you will come soon. They should be used to protect the territorial waters within our state. My colleagues should do same to protect their own areas. Part of my job is to protect lives and properties.”, he said.

Source: www.vanguardngr.com, 6 February 2017

Pak concerned over India's expansionist Maritime Security strategy in Indian Ocean: Sartaj Aziz

Aziz said Pakistan is third largest Indian Ocean littoral country and as a matter of policy it continues to pursue the goals of realising the economic potential of the region. Pakistan's top diplomat Sartaj Aziz on Saturday alleged that India's evolving “expansionist” maritime security strategy and un-demarcated border of Sir Creek pose “threat” to the security of the Indian Ocean. “The un-demarcated borders in Sir Creek have the potential to cast a shadow on maritime security. India's evolving expansionist maritime security strategy is a cause for concern for peace in Indian Ocean,” said Aziz, the PM's Advisor on Foreign Affairs. He made the remarks at a conference on ‘Strategic outlook in Indian Ocean Region 2030 and Beyond – Evolving Challenges and Strategies’ organised by the Pakistan Navy as part of a multi-nation five-day naval exercise in the Arabian Sea.

Nuclearisation of the Indian Ocean has also led to further instability in the region,” he added. He said that with 95 per cent of Pakistan's trade taking place through sea, Pakistan was heavily dependent on a tension-free Indian Ocean. Aziz said Pakistan is third largest Indian Ocean littoral country and as a matter of policy it continues to pursue the goals of realising the economic potential of the region. “We are aware of our national interests and every effort would be made to strengthen our capacity to ensure that we remain ready to meet the emerging maritime security challenges. For

us, to remain oblivious of the developments taking place in the Indian Ocean Region is not an option. These developments have a direct impact on our security and prosperity,” he said.

Aziz said that the several Indian Ocean Region contains several conflict zones and the region’s maritime security challenges have grown and are affected by key variables such as militarisation, the involvement of major and extra-regional powers, and non-traditional security threats. “On the other hand, the militarisation of the Indian Ocean region, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, increased missile capabilities and power projection by foreign militaries are a threat to peace in the Indian Ocean Region. And this trend is likely to intensify in the coming years,” he said. “And to add to this complex scenario, today, the Indian Ocean faces many non-traditional security challenges and threats including piracy, illegal fishing, human trafficking, drug smuggling, trafficking of weapons, maritime pollution and climate change,” he added.

Aziz said Pakistan has a strategic stake in peaceful navigation and security of Indian Ocean region. “Our interests emanate from our coastline that is over 1000 kilometres long, an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of around 300,000 square kilometres, the Karachi port and the newly built deep sea port of Gawadar,” he said. He said that due to presence of several powers in the Indian Ocean, the changing power balance and relentless pursuit of national interest prompted analysts to suggest that many global struggles will play out here in the 21st century. Highlighting the significance of the Indian Ocean, Aziz said that it provides connectivity to the Middle East, Africa and Australia with Europe. “An estimated 55 per cent of known oil reserves of the world and 40 per cent of gas reserves are located in this region. Today, some 40 per cent of the global trade passes through the Indian Ocean,” he said.

The Indian Ocean ports handle about 30 per cent of global trade and half of the world’s container traffic traverses the Ocean, he added. Aziz urged regular dialogue between stakeholders on security and safety of the region and offered that Pakistan was ready and willing to expand contribution for ensuring a peaceful Indian Ocean Region. He said that in order to ensure a secure, peaceful and prosperous Indian Ocean Region, “we need a strategy that is integrated, inter-sectoral and multidisciplinary, and aims at promoting a maritime economy that is innovative, competitive and environment-friendly.” Institutional cooperation and synergies between the institutions in the Indian Ocean Region is important, he added.

Source: indianexpress.com, 11 February 2017



Indian Navy gets air enclave in Mumbai

MUMBAI: An Indian Navy Air Enclave was on Wednesday inaugurated at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport here. Inaugurating the facility of extreme strategic importance, Vice Admiral Girish Luthra, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Western Naval Command, said it was a significant development from the point of view of naval operations. The NAE comprises a huge hangar for aircraft and a large dispersal area on the land owned by the Indian Navy adjoining the airport's runway and taxi track. "This gives a major boost to surveillance and offensive measures in areas of interest in the Western Seaboard. Decades ago, naval helicopters and Super Constellation surveillance aircraft operated from this airport," Vice Admiral Luthra said.

The NAE will enable the navy to stage through all types of fixed-wing aircraft owned by it, including highly-potent and versatile Boeing P8I Long-Range Maritime Reconnaissance (LRMR) planes. Presently, the P8I LRMR aircraft are operated from their base at Arakkonam near Chennai, but with the operationalisation of the NAE, they will be operated from Mumbai. This will enable longer sorties in the Arabian Sea and covering of vast areas. The Indian Navy's air arm started as a fledgling unit in 1953 and has now grown into a strong force, muscled with 10 Naval Air Squadrons, comprising different types of fixed and rotary wing aircraft.

Source: economictimes.indiatimes.com, 2 February 2017

U.S. Navy decommissions U.S.S. Enterprise aircraft carrier

It's the end of an era for the US sea power, in more ways than one: The Navy has decommissioned the USS Enterprise (CVN-65), the world's first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier. The vessel launched in 1961 and is mainly known for playing a pivotal role in several major incidents and conflicts, including the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Vietnam War and the 2003 Iraq War. However, it also served as the quintessential

showcase for what nuclear ships could do. Its eight reactors let it run for years at a time, all the while making more room for the aircraft and their fuel.

As you might guess, the decommissioning process (which started when the Enterprise went inactive in 2012) is considerably trickier than it would be for a conventional warship. It wasn't until December 2016 that crews finished extracting nuclear fuel, and the ship will have to be partly dismantled to remove the reactors. They'll be disposed of relatively safely at Hanford Site, home of the world's first plutonium reactor. It's hard to know what the long-term environmental impact of the ship will be -- while there's no question that the radioactive material is dangerous, this isn't the same as shutting down a land-based nuclear power plant.

Whatever you think of the tech, the ship leaves a long legacy on top of its military accomplishments. It proved the viability of nuclear aircraft carriers, leading the US to build the largest such fleet in the world. Also, this definitely isn't the last (real-world) ship to bear the Enterprise name -- the future CVN-80 will build on its predecessor with both more efficient reactors and systems designed for modern combat, where drones and stealth are as important as fighters and bombers. It won't be ready until 2027, but it should reflect many of the lessons learned over the outgoing Enterprise's 55 years of service.

Source: www.engadget.com, 5 February 2017

Japan-made patrol vessel to operate against terrorism, piracy

Philippine Coast Guard's newest patrol vessel, Parola-class patrol vessel BRP Malabrigo (MRRV-4401), arrived in Zamboanga City, Saturday morning for its deployment. Lieutenant Commander Geronimo Tubilla of BRP Malabrigo (MRRV-4401) said the coast guard vessel will be operating terrorism and piracy.

The said vessel formally entered coast guard service December 22. It arrived from Japan December 8. She is the second of ten Parola-class patrol vessels ordered from Japan Marine United under the Maritime Safety Capability Improvement Project for the Philippine Coast Guard Phase 1 (MSCIP). BRP Tubbataha, the first of ten (10) Parola-class vessels, was delivered in August 2016, deliveries are expected every quarter until completion of 10 units in 2018.

These patrol vessels classified as Multi-Role Response Vessels (MRRV) will act as, according to MSCIP, (1) “primary rescue vessels within the PCG District’s areas of responsibility (AOR) when the extent of the disaster is beyond the capability of floating assets deployed within the area.” The MRRVs will also (2) assist in controlling oil pollution and protection of the marine environment. (3) These vessels will also enforce applicable maritime laws within the designated AOR, particularly relating to illegal fishing and sea patrol. The vessels will provide (4) service as platform for rapid response during relief operations in the area, and (5) transport of personnel and logistical support.

Source: www.update.ph, 5 February 2017

Pakistan prepares for major Naval exercise – AMAN 2017

The Pakistan Navy will be hosting a major multi-national naval exercise involving more than 35 countries from 10 to 14 February, 2017, Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) reports. Designated AMAN 2017, the exercise will stress many mission scenarios including, among others, anti-piracy, at-sea replenishment, and gunnery firings. AMAN had been held on a biennial basis from 2007 to 2013. Of the 15 ships participating in AMAN 2017, China, the U.S., and Russia will each send three, while Turkey, Britain, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Australia will each send one. These countries, alongside Malaysia, Nigeria and the Maldives, will also send their respective special operations forces and marines. Japan will join with two of its P-3C maritime patrol aircraft (MPA).

Dozens of other countries from Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe will also be attending AMAN 2017, these include, among many others, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Italy, Morocco, Nigeria, Poland, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea and Turkmenistan.

The Commander of the Pakistan Navy Fleet, Vice Admiral Arifullah Hussaini, lauded the Pakistan Navy's role in the Arabian Sea, particularly its participation in Combined Task Force 150 (CTF-150) and CTF-151, which are multi-national coalitions aimed at mitigating piracy, terrorism and other maritime crimes. Vice Adm. Hussaini also noted that the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will likely instigate a sharp increase in maritime activity in the Arabian Sea, thus raising the Pakistan Navy's national importance.

Notes & Comments:

In the lead-up to AMAN 2017, the Pakistan Navy had conducted a series of bilateral naval exercises in late 2016 with Turkey, China, Russia and Oman. In comparison to these earlier initiatives, AMAN – especially AMAN 2017 – is a larger and higher profile event. However, the focus appears to be largely on maritime security in the context of countering piracy, terrorism, trafficking and other maritime crimes.

The participation of the U.S. and China was to be expected, but Russia's entry as one of the three leading contributors is a new development. Thus far, Russia appears to be shaping its growing defence ties with Pakistan on internal security, counterinsurgency and counterterrorism issues, but it is intent on showing that it has formal defence relations with Pakistan.

Source: quwa.org, 8 February 2017

China beefs up military clout in S. China Sea

BEIJING • China has upgraded its military infrastructure in the disputed Paracel chain of islands in the South China Sea, according to a Washington-based think-tank. Beijing has constructed harbours, helipads and a full-fledged helicopter base on several islands in the island chain north of the hotly contested Spratlys, said the Centre for Strategic and International Studies' (CSIS) Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative this week. The report, released on Wednesday, says that China now occupies 20 outposts in the Paracels which are also claimed by Vietnam and Taiwan. "Three of these now have protected harbours capable of hosting large numbers of naval and civilian vessels. Four others boast smaller harbours, with a fifth under construction on Drummond Island. Five of the islands contain helipads, with Duncan Island housing a full

helicopter base," the report said. The Paracels, said CSIS, "plays a key role in China's goal of establishing surveillance and power projection capabilities throughout the South China Sea". Before-and-after satellite images showed that the most extensive build-up was carried out on Woody Island, the largest of the Paracels. "Not all of China's outposts in the Paracels currently house significant infrastructure, and many contain no more than one or two buildings (including two with only lighthouses). But, the presence of small buildings and construction materials suggests China may be preparing to expand those features," said the think-tank.

As the Woody Island, has been used as "a blueprint for upgrades at China's three largest bases in the Spratlys", the researchers conclude that it is reasonable to assume that the bases on Fiery Cross, Subi and Mischief reefs in the Spratlys could soon host capabilities similar to those on Woody Island, including surface-to-air missiles and cruise missiles. The CSIS claimed in December that China appeared to have installed weapons, including anti-aircraft and anti-missile systems, on all seven of the artificial islands it has built in the Spratlys. At that time, a spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry said that its construction in the South China Sea was mainly for civilian use and that it was "legitimate and normal" for it to take steps to defend its territory. "If China's building of normal facilities and deploying necessary territorial defensive facilities on its own islands is considered militarisation, then what is the sailing of fleets into the South China Sea?" said Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang, in an apparent reference to United States "freedom of navigation" patrols in the waters.

China's building up of islands in the disputed waters has been an irritant for rival claimants and a source of tension with the US. The US Pacific Fleet said yesterday that two military aircraft from China and the US had an "unsafe" encounter on Wednesday over the disputed Scarborough Shoal, reported Bloomberg. A People's Liberation Army Air Force KJ-200 surveillance plane had "an interaction characterised by US Pacific Command as 'unsafe'" with a Navy P-3C Orion surveillance aircraft, Pacific Command spokesman Robert Shuford said in an e-mail. An international tribunal last July had dismissed China's claims to almost all of the South China Sea. Beijing says it would ignore the ruling.

Source: www.straitstimes.com, 11 February 2017

UEC has developed a comprehensive after-sales support programme for the Indian Navy's Fighter Engines

In 2016, UEC completed the delivery of RD-33MK turbofan engines to the Indian navy, successfully fulfilling its contractual obligations. Within the framework of collaboration with the Russian United Aircraft Corporation, the introduction of such a programme will speed up the processing of requests from the Indian customer considerably. This will enable quick solutions to any technical problems that may arise during the operation of the engines. The technical support programme includes maintenance and repair; logistical support; delivery of technical documentation; and staff training. In addition, a 24-hour data exchange channel will facilitate communication between the two parties. The RD-33MK, a turbofan engine with an afterburner, is a heavily upgraded version of the RD-33. The RD-33MK offers a higher thrust than the basic model, while retaining all the advantages of the original. It is equipped with a modern FADEC-type engine control system. This modernised turbine cooling system significantly extends the length of the engine's service life. The advantages of the RD-33MK include low specific fuel consumption; high gas flow stability in all operational modes, including the firing of on-board weapons, which substantially improves control of the aircraft.

Jet fighters equipped with this engine can take off safely from the aircraft carrier deck and efficiently carry out combat missions in hot climatic conditions. The engine features a modular design, which enables individual parts, units and modules to be repaired or replaced in the field. The RD-33MK engine is currently installed in MiG-29K/KUB carrier-based fighters and MiG-35 4++ generation multi-role fighters. In 2014, UEC received a license from the FSMTC (Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation of Russia) for engaging in independent foreign trade activities relating to maintenance support for military production.

UEC (United Engine Corporation, part of the Rostec State Corporation) is an integrated structure specialising in the development, serial production, service and support of engines for military and civil aviation, space programs and naval applications, as well as for the oil and gas and power generation industries.

Source: www.thehindubusinessline.com, 13 February 2017

MBDA awaits nod to design, produce surface-to-air missiles

Even as European missile major MBDA has announced a joint venture with L&T to develop and supply fifth generation anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM), the company is awaiting a nod from India's Defence Ministry to finalise negotiations to design and co-produce short range surface-to-air missiles (SRSAMs) in India. The missile developer and manufacturer is keen to offer advanced technology transfer here. SRSAM systems will technically replace the Indian Navy's Israeli Barak-1 air defence systems.

Features

Weighing around 100 kg, SRSAM is a Mach 3-class missile, with a range of 40 km, and is normally used for naval air defence applications. Full SRSAM systems comprise missile launchers, radar sensors, and combat management systems. India had finalised a missile co-development project with France to manufacture a range of SRSAMs for the armed forces almost ten years ago.

DRDO partnership

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is the lead organisation for the design and development of the SRSAM for the Indian Navy, while Bharat Dynamics is the ministry's missile production enterprise. In an interaction with *BusinessLine* here in late January, Loic Piedevache, Country Head (India), MBDA Group, said that though discussions regarding the SRSAM had reached the last stage, they were yet to get a final approval. Stating that MBDA has been in India for more than four decades and has been supplying the Indian Army with well-known missiles like the MILAN, MICA, ASRAAM, MISTRAL among others, the official said the defence major is looking forward to the SRSAM deal. "SRSAM for the Indian Navy is a co-development project with DRDO. Here, DRDO is the lead agency and MBDA is a strategic and key partner," Piedevache explained, accompanied by senior officials in Mumbai.

The official said MBDA is keen to offer future missiles like the ATGM "with the latest technologies for Indian requirements. We could have the same approach with our new technologies, just like the SRSAM." Missile Moyenne Portee (MMP) is a portable anti-tank guided missile. "The MMP is the 5th generation ATGM which has been ordered by the French government, using the very latest technologies. We know there is a

requirement in India for an ATGM, but different from the French one,” said the official.

Why it's significant

MMP is a vital addition to MBDA's range of battlefield systems. It can be fired from confined spaces and against non-line of sight targets. Suitable for a wide range of battlefield targets – from tanks to infrastructures – as well as platforms from portable firing posts to vehicles and army aviation platforms, MMP's architecture and technologies have been recognised with a contract placed for the French army. MMP is a land combat missile system designed for dismounted infantry as well as for integration on combat vehicles. Featuring both 'fire-and-forget' and 'man-in-the-loop' operation, the network-enabled MMP's design includes the growth potential necessary for a future family of missiles for modern land combat. MMP will replace the Milan and Javelin anti-tank missiles in service with the French Army and special forces from 2017.

Customised for India

Stating that the MMP would need to be “co-developed in India using our existing technologies”, Piedevache said MBDA could co-develop it with India on the same scheme as the SRSAM. “We could co-develop a new missile, manufactured in India for specific Indian requirement,” he said, referring to one that would be designed to meet India's specific operational parameters such as range, launch platform and warhead type. The JV with L&T announced on February 13 is further set to cement this.

Source: www.thehindubusinessline.com, 13 February 2017

India's Increased Naval Capacities Are Good for Regional Security

A key American partner, India, is set to conduct another missile test that will have a wide range of consequences on regional dynamics for years to come. India's new K-4 nuclear-capable, submarine-launched ballistic missile is expected to have a range of 3,500 kilometers, a serious improvement over its current operational missile of the same kind. When coupled with India's burgeoning nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine program, India is set to seriously increase its second-strike capability in the

coming years. This trend aligns with India's ongoing efforts to modernize its military with particular focus on naval power. A heftier military capability will extend India's national influence and potentially rival China. India's current operational submarine-launched ballistic missile, the K-15, has a range of approximately 750 kilometers and was designed to be used by the INS Arihant, India's first indigenously built nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine. While the Arihant is primarily a training platform that will be used to train crews for future nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines, it is also capable of conducting deterrence patrols. India currently has plans to build up to five nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines of a similar design in the future. Based on the Arihant's design, these will most likely be used in naval bastions, with cover provided by other naval vessels and aircraft in the Bay of Bengal or near the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

These submarines lack the necessary speed and stealth capabilities to effectively defend themselves against hostile attack submarines. That is why the increased range of the K-4 is so significant. It would give India the capability to strike targets in China or Pakistan from the Bay of Bengal in the event of war. India is also expected to increase naval facilities on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands for this purpose. Some have argued that this new capability from India could lead to more destabilization and conflict in the region rather than less, forcing an arms race in anti-submarine weapons or adding a destabilizing element to future crises. While that may be the case, second-strike capability is a priority for India due to its policy of "no first use" with its nuclear arsenal. In order to maintain deterrence, it has to ensure that its arsenal cannot be neutralized by a preemptive strike. Nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines have secured this capability for the U.S., Soviet Union/Russia, and China for years, and India seems set to cultivate this technology for its own security. As the U.S. looks to India to play a more active role in the Asia-Pacific region, this growth in capability will enhance India's ability to step into that role, further increasing the potential of the U.S.-India strategic partnership.

Source: idrw.org, 14 February 2017

Renewable Energy projects to save Rs. 75 crore annually for India's major Ports

The Ministry of Shipping, as a part of its 'Green Port Initiative' has been emphasizing on use of renewable sources of energy to power Major Ports. The Ministry aims to set up 91.50 MW of solar energy capacity at the twelve Major Ports and 45 MW of wind energy capacity by the two Major Ports of Kandla and V. O. Chidambaranar. Major Ports have started the process of setting-up renewable energy projects by investing Rs.704.52 crores (Solar–Rs. 412.02 Cr and Wind–Rs. 292.50 Cr) in these projects, The Ministry of Shipping said in its press release.

When completed, these renewable energy projects will help in the reduction of carbon dioxide emission by 136,500 MT annually. These projects will also help to reduce cost of power purchased by utilization of renewable energy for power generation, resulting in estimated saving of Rs 75 crores annually, when fully commissioned.

The wind energy projects will be executed by two Major Ports namely Kandla Port and V.O. Chidambaranar Port. The total capacity of the wind energy projects is 45 MW out of which 6 MW has already been commissioned by Kandla Port. A total of 15.20 MW of solar projects has also been commissioned with Visakhapatnam Port leading the way with 9 MW, while the other ports in which solar projects have been commissioned are Kolkata Port (0.06 MW), New Mangalore Port (4.35 MW), V.O. Chidambaranar Port (0.5 MW), Mumbai Port (0.125 MW), Chennai Port (0.1 MW), Mormugao (0.24 MW) & JNPT (0.82 MW). The remaining solar power projects will be commissioned phase wise and is expected to be completed by 2018.

It may be recalled that a MoU was signed between Indian Ports Association (IPA) and Solar Energy Corporation of India on the 15th of October, 2015 for the development of solar power projects at Major Ports. This is a new initiative by Major Ports which has been taken in line with the 'Green Port Initiative' policy of the Government of India.

Source: [n. portnews.ru](http://n.portnews.ru), 2 February 2017

Frustrated India banking on Chabahar

Amanullah Khan

Extremely frustrated by economic stability of Pakistan and the emerging Gwadar Port under CPEC program, India has decided to invest in Iranian port of Chabahar with a malicious attempt to diminish importance of strategically important port of Gwadar. It may be noted that Chabahar is considered as an India's answer to China's One Belt One Road policy under which it is developing Gwadar port in Pakistan; just few miles away from Chabahar. It will not be out of place to mention that after much dilly dallying, India has started special allocation for development of Chabahar port in Iran in its annual budget. Indian government has allocated \$22.5 million for the development of Chabahar port in financial year starting from April this year said reports about Indian Budget. India had received contract to develop a multipurpose cargo terminal (600 meters length) and a container terminal (640 meters length) at Chabahar port last year in May. Indian government had agreed to equip both the terminals with equipment worth \$85 million. Last year, Indian government had allocated \$15 million for the said project. India has also planned major event at Chabahar port in April this year whereas it will showcase the opportunities for private players.

India had pledged \$500 million investment in the project mostly from Indian private companies having business interest in Iran, said reports. According to Indian Budget, India's EXIM bank has also promised \$150 million credit for the development of phase 1 of the port, within 4 months of receiving their application through Central Bank of Iran. India aims to have an access to Eastern transit corridor to eastern part of Iran, landlocked Afghanistan and CIS countries like Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan etc. Under the port deal, India will also build rail road in Afghanistan aiming for Afghanistan's iron reserves, which are estimated to be worth up to \$3 trillion. Chabahar project is also projected as alternative to North South Corridor i.e. access to Russia and North Baltic countries

Source: pakobserver.net, 7 February 2017

Lanka worries about Indian ‘Trojan horse’

For decades before and after Sri Lanka’s independence in 1948, India’s relations with the island nation were political and adversarial. But since the second half of the 1990s, there has been a gradual shift to trade, development assistance and investment, in that order. While India has been wanting to build bridges with Lanka, veering from two decades of exclusive involvement with the intractable Tamil question, the latter has been exploring government-to-government economic tie-ups with India.

The ice was broken in the mid 1990s when an India-friendly Chandrika Kumaratunga became president on the promise of a rapprochement with Tamils (including the LTTE), and also friendship with India which had backed the Tamil demand for autonomy and imposed the India-Sri Lanka Accord in 1987 to bring it about. Quick negotiations led to the India–Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISLFTA) in 1999. What followed was a remarkable increase in bilateral trade, set to reach \$5 billion now.

Though the balance of trade is heavily in India’s favour, Lanka’s exports to India grew from a minuscule \$58 million in 2000 to over \$600 million in 2015-16, thanks to the agreement. India’s exports to Lanka are much higher at \$4 billion, but 70 per cent of it lies outside the FTA. India’s assistance portfolio in Lanka is now nearly \$2.6 billion, out of which \$436 million is in the form of grants. Even its loans are cheap coming at an interest of 1.75 per cent. Taking the money spent and pledged together, India has extended to Lanka \$1 billion for rebuilding its decrepit railways. The 50,000 houses for war-affected Tamils and poor Indian-origin Tamils cost India \$270 million. Recently, India gave \$20 million for rainwater harvesting in the dry Northern Province; \$7.5 million was given for a free ambulance service.

Indian FDI in Lanka totals over \$500 million. India has pledged to set up a 500 MW LNG-powered plant at Kerawalapitiya. Indian companies want to invest in the East Container Terminal at Colombo port and the Trincomalee port hinterland development. Indian trans-shipment accounts for 70 per cent of the earnings of the Colombo port which is sustaining the loss-making Chinese- built Hambantota port. However, India’s economic engagement with Lanka has not been an unmixed blessing.

Fear of economic domination by the 'Big Brother' has replaced the earlier fear of political and military dominance. Sri Lankans argue that India's Non-Tariff Barriers have greatly restricted their exports under the FTA. Fears of an influx of Indian professionals stopped the signing of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement at the last minute. Agitators are now threatening to scuttle talks on Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement (ETCA) though India ruled out "movement of natural persons".

Despite an assurance that almost all employees of the \$7.5 million Indian ambulance service would be Lankans, it was seen as a "Trojan Horse of RAW". India was disappointed when the 500 MW coal-fired power plant project at Sampur was called off after six years of talks. As a compensation for its ouster from Sampur, Colombo said India could set up an LNGbased 500 MW power plant in Kerawalapitya, but it is not known if the offer would stand in the months to come. In violation of an India-Sri Lanka 2003 agreement, the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) has been trying to take over three of the 99 oil tanks in Trincomalee given to the Lanka Indian Oil Corporation (LIOC) for 35 years.

Source: www.newindianexpress.com, 09 February 2017

Terminals at major ports to attract cruise tourism

New Delhi, Feb 9 (PTI) To promote cruise tourism in India, the government has developed terminals at four major ports -- Mumbai, Mormugao, New Mangalore and Cochin -- and also allowed foreign vessels to call without licence from Director General of Shipping, Parliament was informed today.

Also, a new cruise terminal is under development at Chennai Port and scheduled to be completed by February 2017. "To attract cruise lines/ships as a part of cruise tourism in India, the government has developed cruise terminals at four major ports namely Mumbai Port, Mormugao Port, New Mangalore Port and Cochin Port," Minister of Shipping Nitin Gadkari informed Lok Sabha in a written reply.

The Minister said a task force has been constituted jointly by Ministries of Shipping and Tourism for promoting cruise tourism besides a consultant has also been appointed for preparing action plan to identify domestic and international cruise

circuits. Gadkari said foreign flag vessels carrying passengers have been allowed to call at Indian ports till February 5, 2024 without obtaining licences from Director General of Shipping. "To attract cruise liners to make major ports as homeports, the major ports provide rebate of 25 per cent in vessel related charges for coastal cruise movement. This will be in addition to the 40 per cent existing rebate for coastal vessels," Gadkari said. Further, walk-in-berthing/preferential berthing is given to homeport cruise without any extra charge, he said.

Also, all major ports provide a minimum 30 per cent rebate across the board on all vessel related charges (port dues, pilotage and berth hire) from the notified scale of rates of cruise ships. PTI NAM MKJ

Source : indiatoday.intoday.in , 9 February 2017

Chabahar port initiative to benefit Afghan: US General

The co-operation between India and Iran on the strategic Chabahar port in southern Iran will be beneficial to Afghanistan in terms of economic development, a top US general has said as he praised New Delhi's initiatives in the war-torn country. "The governments of India, Iran and Afghanistan signed an agreement over the Chabahar Port in southern Iran. Actually, this initiative would be very beneficial to Afghanistan, in terms of economic development," General John Nicholson, Commander of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan told members of the Senate Armed Services Committee during a Congressional hearing on Afghanistan. "There's also, ongoing conversations about water treaties between Afghanistan and Iran. Iran needs Afghanistan's water," he said in his testimony before the powerful Senate committee. "There are mutual interests that Iran and Afghanistan share water rights, commerce. We welcome the recent economic treaty between Iran, Afghanistan and India on the Chabahar port. We think this offers Afghanistan economic alternative to going through pack," Nicholson said.

India has increased its aid to Afghanistan, he said. "India has dedicated another \$1 billion on top of the \$2 billion that they have already given to Afghan development needs and we appreciate their support," Nicholson said.

At the Brussels Conference in October last year, 75 countries and organisations confirmed their intention to provide \$15.2 billion to Afghanistan's development needs and this plays a very positive role, going into the future, he said. "These expressions of international commitment reflect the importance which the world places on stability in Afghanistan," Nicholson said. A "milestone" pact on the strategic Chabahar port in southern Iran, which will give India access to Afghanistan and Europe bypassing Pakistan, was inked by India and Iran in May 2016 after detailed discussions between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani.

Source: indianexpress.com, 10 February 2017

China-Pakistan Corridor to Increase Maritime Activity, Trade 'Manifold'

KARACHI (Sputnik) — The International Maritime Conference is one of the main events of the Multinational Naval Exercise AMAN-2017, which is currently taking place near Pakistan's port city of Karachi in the Arabian Sea. "The 7th International Maritime conference comes with an opportune time when China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Gwadar Port have been recently operationalized, as a result of which maritime activities in the region are set to increase manifold," Zakaullah said.

He underlined that CPEC, which is a part of China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) project, is a defining development which has the potential to play a trend setting role in the region maritime landscape. "CPEC and Gwadar Port have emerged as potential stimuli for socio-cultural integration and politico-economic development, providing much desired connectivity and excess for the entire region," he said.

According to the chief of the Pakistani Naval Staff, this year's conference, which has the theme "Strategic Outlook in Indian Ocean Region 2030 and Beyond-Evolving Challenges and Strategies," will lay much needed focus on the maritime economy and security as well as maritime environment in the Indian Ocean Region. He also stressed that multifaceted challenges such as maritime terrorism, piracy, trafficking in drugs, people, firearms as well as issues related to maritime environment "cannot be addressed single-handedly by any of the nation and require a collaborative approach."

The AMAN-17 is the fifth Multinational Exercise of AMAN series, held in Pakistan since 2007. Navies of 37 countries are participating in AMAN-17, including Australia,

China, Indonesia, Turkey, Russia, Sri Lanka, the United Kingdom, the United States and Japan. The drills are held on February 10-14 in the Arabian Sea off Karachi.

Source: sputniknews.com, 11 February 2017

Industrial clusters near ports can reduce logistics cost: Study

Emergence of industrial clusters near the port, consolidation of distribution centres and warehouses post GST can address the infrastructural bottlenecks and reduce the average in-land logistics cost by as much as 68 per cent, according to a research report on the maritime sector. The report released by Ernst and Young (EY) in association with the Andhra Pradesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry Federation (APCCIF) at the East Coast Maritime Business Summit on Friday said some of the major ports have land constraints limiting their ability to expand as well as promote port based industrial zone. The study also claims that non-major ports have much bigger land banks and have better infrastructure. Kiran Malla, director (corporate finance and strategy), EY India, said “If India has to become a superpower by 2030, it has to get ready to make the next big leap in trade. Fortunately, it has a strategic advantage in terms of long coastline which can serve as a backbone for trade. Right strategy would be to create economic epicentres around modern ports with world class infrastructure.”

In order to reduce costs arising from infrastructure bottlenecks, several private non-major ports have developed close to demand clusters, the report said, adding that they are also implementing new concepts to reduce logistics costs. According to the report, non-major ports are also to lead on cost optimisation with improved productivity and cutting edge technology ushering Indian ports onto the world stage. Potluri Bhaskara Rao, APCCIF general secretary, said, “Indian maritime trade has been drawing attention both at home and globally on the back of improved trade and a series of measures launched by the government to transform the port sector while establishing the country as a major manufacturing and trading hub. This research aims to highlight key opportunities and challenges in the ports sector. It also attempts to showcase the vast opportunity present in the ports sector, especially on the east coast.”

Source: www.hellenicshippingnews.com, 13 February 2017

Genoil Inc. signs MOU for low sulphur fuel collaboration with Bomin Group

Genoil Inc, (GNOLF), the publicly traded clean technology engineering company for the petroleum industries, today announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Bomin Group, a leading global physical supplier and trader of marine fuel, for a potential collaboration to develop low sulphur fuel products compliant with the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) newly announced global low sulphur fuel regulations.

The MOU sees the two companies confirm their mutual intent to provide a framework, which will aim to develop a co-operation agreement to supply the market with compliant low sulphur products, utilising Genoil's technology, in conjunction with Bomin's global physical supply and storage infrastructure.

Genoil's proprietary technology, the Hydroconversion Upgrader (GHU), converts heavy crude oils and refinery residual products into cleaner, lower emission energy. The GHU removes sulphur from Heavy Fuel Oil (HFO), without altering the quality, and turns it into compatible and more cost-effective low sulphur fuel oil, compliant with new MARPOL Annex VI regulations, which mandates the use of fuel with a sulphur content of less than 0.5% globally from 2020. Genoil's innovation improves upon the existing data-verified Fixed Bed Reactor technology, which is currently used in nearly 85% of the world's reactors. A Genoil GHU unit can be placed in locations including receiving terminals, pipelines and ports.

Bruce Abbott, President and Chief Operating Officer, Genoil Inc, commented:

"With the 2020 global sulphur cap now confirmed, we are delighted to explore this potential partnership with Bomin Group, and test the market opportunity for 0.5% low sulphur fuel oil. We believe that our technology can provide the market with cheaper, compatible and compliant fuel products, at a time when there are real concerns within the industry over the supply and cost of distillates, and other solutions. Bomin's global infrastructure and network, and their expertise in physical supply and storage makes them an ideal partner to explore this opportunity."

Source: www.hellenicshippingnews.com, 14 February 2017



Test on Mediterranean cruise ship revealed harmful levels of Air Pollution on deck

An experiment conducted on the deck of a Mediterranean cruise ship has revealed high levels of harmful pollution in the air. The tests, which were undertaken by journalists on an episode of the French documentary series *Thalassa* as the ship was leaving Marseille, revealed up to 200 times the normal level of harmful particles in the air. On the sun deck and jogging lane of the boat, there were an average of 60,000 particles per cubic centimetre recorded during a 50-minute reading, which compares to an average of 1,000 to 2,000 particles usually found in fresh sea breeze. The name of the cruise ship was not disclosed during the programme, so it is unclear whether most liners would suffer from the same issue, but the environmental pressure group Naturschutzbund Deutschland (NABU) said that many vessels have yet to switch to cleaner fuel.

Leif Miller, chief executive of Germany's NABU, said: "Ship owners expose their passengers to high loads of health damaging pollutants. "Despite these shocking data major parts of the cruise industry are refusing to switch to cleaner fuels and to install exhaust gas cleaning systems like they have been a common standard for all land-based sources for years." For some years, the German Lung Foundation had been advising that passengers with chronic respiratory diseases should stay in certain areas on the deck of cruise ships to avoid the inhalation of ship exhaust gases.

Source: www.thesun.co.uk, 2 February 2017

Pollution degrades Marine Biodiversity

Marine pollution will culminate in the degradation of marine biodiversity, especially coral reefs which cover about 1,122 sq.km. of seabed off the country's coast. *According to the Vietnam Administration of Seas and Islands, about 20 percent of reefs have coral coverage of under 25 percent at present. Meanwhile, 60 percent of reefs have between 26-50 percent coral coverage and only 3 percent of reefs have coral covering more than 75 percent of their areas.*

“Vietnam has never faced such a big challenge to its coral like it is at present. More than 50 tonnes of coral, excluding black coral in Quang Binh, Quang Tri and Quang Ninh provinces and Hai Phong city, disappear every year. If that trend continues, the country will be unable to see any coral in its offshore waters within the next 20 years,” the Institute of Oceanography warned.

Especially, Vietnam is facing serious marine pollution with mass fish deaths in some central provinces last April the latest incident recorded. The country boasts a coast of over 3,260km, an exclusive economic zone of more than 1 million sq. km and over 3,000 islands. According to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the main cause of marine pollution is the widespread unplanned development of industry, tourism and aquaculture, growing population and poverty, low public awareness and policy loopholes. About 70 – 80 percent of the waste at sea hails from the mainland where many factories and residential areas release untreated waste water and solid waste into coastal rivers or directly into the sea.

In aquaculture, one hectare of shrimp farming produces about 5 tonnes of solid waste and tens of thousands of cubic metres of waste water in one crop. With over 600,000ha of shrimp farms in Vietnam, nearly 3 million tonnes of solid waste will be discarded to the environment every year. The Institute of Oceanography also blames marine pollution on the unreasonable use of coastal soil, leading to an increasing scarcity of fresh water, land erosion and soil settlement in littoral areas.

Tourism activities have also negatively influenced the marine environment. The Cat Ba National Park with 5,400ha of water surface in the northern region is an example. The environment there has been degraded due to irrational tourism and aquaculture that releases thousands of tonnes of waste into the sea every day.

Meanwhile, there have been more and more oil spills at sea as higher petroleum demand and excessive oil exploitation have caused more frequent incidents relating to oil drilling and tankers. Hundreds of offshore oil wells produce 5,600 tonnes of oil and gas waste every year, about 20 – 30 percent of which are dangerous and untreated. More than 100 rivers in Vietnam pour some 80 cubic kilometres of water depositing 270 – 300 million tonnes of alluvium into the sea each year, which can carry pollutants such as heavy metallic elements and toxic substances from industrial, residential, aquatic farming and agricultural zones.

In 2010, large amounts of waste were recorded in coastal waters, including 35,160 tonnes of oil, 26 – 52 tonnes of nitrogen and 15 – 30 tonnes of ammonium a day. Coastal seawater has been found to be polluted with organic substances, zinc and pesticides. The red tide phenomenon has also been seen in the waters off the south-central coast such as in Khanh Hoa, Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan provinces, killing aquatic species farmed there. More than 85 marine species have been listed as endangered at different levels, and some 70 of them are listed in Vietnam's Red Book of endangered species.

More than 50 percent of big cities, nearly 60 percent of the population and most industrial parks, export processing zones, aquaculture areas and tourism activities are at sea and coastal areas, which are rich in natural resources and economic development potential. Those areas are recording fast population growth and migration. While the shrimp and fish volume in waters near the mainland are running out, about 600,000 fishermen in the 28 coastal provinces and cities are still seeking every possible way to harvest more. This is exhausting marine resources even more rapidly.

Source: english.vietnamnet.vn, 2 February 2017

Ocean Pollution: Dead Whale with Stomach full of Plastic bags found beached, starving

Given the abundance of plastic saturating the world's oceans, it's no surprise that marine animals frequently mistake inedible items for food. A Cuvier whale found off the coast of Norway over the weekend did just that. Researchers found the whale beached on the shore with at least 30 plastic bags and other items wedged inside its stomach that had prevented it from eating.

“It wasn't like it was in just part of the stomach. It filled up the whole space. I think the whale has been in pain,” Dr. Terje Lislevand, a zoologist at the University of Bergen in Norway, told the Bergens Tidende newspaper, noting that it was emaciated when found. “I don't think it's been comfortable to have this in the stomach. It's the explanation of why the animal acted so strange and stranded.”

Numerous efforts were made to get the whale back out to sea, but scientists were ultimately unsuccessful and had to shoot the animal. Researchers said the 20-foot whale probably mistook the plastic bags for squid, one of the main sources of food for Cuvier whales.

Source: www.ibtimes.com, 3 February 2017

Shrimp price fluctuations help pinpoint the economic effects of Pollution

Low oxygen levels cause a big problem for aquatic ecosystems. When oxygen falls below two milligrams per liter, the area is classed as “hypoxic,” a condition that can be driven by pollution such as agricultural runoff. Hypoxia has an effect on marine life that’s pretty relevant to fisheries: low oxygen in the environment slows down the growth of individual animals, meaning that populations are made up of smaller creatures.

Research published in *PNAS* this week, led by Martin D. Smith at Duke University, uses a new method that takes a big step toward being able to quantify the economic impacts of the pollution that causes hypoxia. The approach could give policymakers a better tool to understand the costs and benefits of various pollution controls. Their technique could also help researchers to observe the effects of marine disturbances in other areas. Smith and his colleagues looked at data from the Gulf of Mexico, which has the world’s largest area of seasonal hypoxia, peaking in the summer. The area is home to an important brown shrimp fishery, which should show the effects of hypoxia—but it’s not quite so simple to detect this.

“Although studies demonstrate ecological effects of hypoxia, economic consequences have not been determined in this fishery,” the authors write. Determining these economic consequences is a vital step in informing policy decision. It’s expensive to control pollution upstream of hypoxic areas, so knowing the economic effects of hypoxia help to determine whether the costs are worth it on a purely economic basis.

To get a clear picture of the causal effects of hypoxia, what you really need is a natural experiment: one area that becomes hypoxic, where you can trace the impact on fisheries over time; and another area that isn’t hypoxic to act as a control or baseline. The problem is that ships aren’t static—if one area is producing better harvests, people will just move there. That makes it impossible to clearly compare the hauls from hypoxic areas to non-hypoxic areas.

Where you can expect to see, a difference is in the prices of shrimp. If the populations of shrimp in hypoxic areas have smaller individuals and fewer large ones, that should make larger shrimp more scarce, which in turn makes them more expensive. Smaller shrimp will be more abundant, driving their price down. Conveniently, shrimp are generally sold by size, making this relatively easy to track, but not entirely easy: local shortages can be quickly overcome by imports, which means that any price fluctuations will be short-lived.

To see whether our expectations actually appeared in the data, Smith and his colleagues looked at seasonal hypoxia, tracking shrimp prices on a month-by-month basis from 1990 to 2010. They found a strong relationship between prices and hypoxia: when hypoxia peaked, so did the prices of large shrimp, while the prices of smaller categories of shrimp dipped. This finding is wider-reaching than just the prices of shrimp from the Gulf of Mexico. The method that Smith and his colleagues have developed could be used in other fisheries to determine the impacts not just of hypoxia, but also other environmental disturbances—assuming the right kinds of data can be found. Because environmental impacts on fisheries run a lot deeper than just shrimp and just hypoxia, the cumulative economic impacts could slowly be revealed by multiple analyses.

If the goal is to provide evidence that there's an economic incentive to do something about hypoxia, there's a lot more information to gather. "An ideal claim for policy analysis would be something like "reducing nutrient runoff X percent leads to economic benefits for shrimp (and other fisheries) of \$Y," the authors write. For the moment, there isn't enough data to make a claim like this.

Source: arstechnica.com, 3 February 2017

Minister seeks solutions to combat Pollution from marine plastic wastes

Jakarta (ANTARA News) - The office of the coordinating minister for maritime affairs is seeking solutions to tackle pollution arising from marine plastic garbage, according to an official of the maritime coordinating ministry. "We are drawing up an action plan on handling plastic trash and are in the process of discussing it with the World Bank for a budget intervention," Deputy I for Maritime Sovereignty of the Coordinating Maritime Affairs Ministry Arif Havas Oegroseno stated in Jakarta on Monday.

Oegroseno said the problem of plastic garbage has a direct impact on the sustainability of the fisheries sector as well as on the marine health and environment. Oegroseno noted that starting this year, efforts have been made to tackle wastes at sea. As many as 15 cities are participating in a study to seek solutions to the issue of marine plastic wastes. Among the 15 cities are Jakarta, Makassar, Semarang, Surabaya, Medan, and Batam. "The study has been conducted since last week and will be continued for three days," he revealed.

The results of the study will be used to decide the steps to be taken by the ministries and government institutions to handle plastic wastes at sea. The involved ministries and government institutions comprised the Public Works and Public Housing Ministry, Environment and Forestry Ministry, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Ministry, Agency for Assessment and Application of Technology, and Education and Culture Ministry. "The ministry of education and culture will be involved, as the waste problem is closely related to the mindset of the people," Havas remarked. Havas said that the government will also cooperate with several countries facing the same problem, such as Denmark, the US, Australia, and the Netherlands.

"The US is also facing the same problem, so we can exchange information on ways to solve it," he stated. Based on a study, Indonesia ranked as the second plastic waste contributor to the world's maritime waters. (*)

Source: www.antaranews.com, 6 February 2017

Sydney Harbour hidden Plastic Pollution is killing endangered turtles and Marine Life

The Taronga Wildlife Hospital is treating a juvenile turtle dubbed Clifton, because it was found at Clifton Gardens on the north shore. Hospital manager, Libby Hall, said snorkelers discovered the turtle on December 28. It could not swim or feed because it had ingested plastic. "He was found covered in barnacles. He had barnacles all over his eyes. All over his shell," Ms Hall said. "He was in a very bad state. He was very, very thin and weak." Ms Hall said only one in 1,000 green turtles survive to adulthood, and any death is significant. It is believed Cliff is a teenage turtle, about 17 or 18 years old. Green Turtles need to reach the age of 30 before they can reproduce.

"About 80 per cent of the marine turtles that come to the hospital are affected by marine debris," Ms Hall said. "They feed on jellyfish. And plastic bags look exactly like jellyfish. So, do balloons for that matter." Ms Hall emptied a jar of plastic that was removed from the intestine of a juvenile green turtle that died in Sydney.

It was a startling haul from a relatively small creature. "These are the plastics ... there's balloons in there as well. Recycled and hard plastics and string," she said. "Of the 45 turtles that we get each year ... the majority are affected by marine debris, either plastic or fishing line and hooks."

Why don't the supermarkets ban the plastic bag?

Conservationists are calling for NSW to ban single-use plastic bags, which are a small but significant proportion of the 10 tonnes of plastic waste that litters the harbour and its foreshores each year. David Thomas is the founder of a community group called Eco Divers. A self-styled "environmental ninja", he has been scouring the waters off Manly, removing rubbish for more than 30 years. "Seventy-five per cent of what goes in the water stays in the water," he said. "Only about 25 per cent floats ... the bulk is still underwater." After a half-hour dive at the western end of Manly Cove, Mr Thomas filled a mesh bag with rubbish, including balloons that had bite marks from where marine life had tried to eat it. "This nylon balloon string is impossible to break," he said. "So, that ends up as entanglement or they swallow that and it gets tangled up in their digestive system. And basically, they're either going to die or if we're lucky, get rescued." Mr Thomas said supermarkets should reintroduce paper bags. "I'm calling Woolworths out — you could be the first," he said.

"Why do we need to be government-driven?"

Why don't we do it from the bottom up?

There's certainly a lot of people who don't want plastic bags. And the environment? "Well, we can't pay that price any longer." The ABC contacted Coles and Woolworths for comment. Both companies said they comply with government and territory regulation. Media player: "Space" to play, "M" to mute, "left" and "right" to seek.

Or should this be a national issue?

So far South Australia, the Northern Territory, Tasmania and the ACT have banned single-use plastic bags. Queensland will join them next year. Ian Kiernan, the Chairman of Cleanup Australia, said a NSW ban would be a quick and effective way to reduce pollution around Sydney. "It's up to the Government to institute that. They're avoiding it," he said. "The environment is under incredible stress. "It's not the harbour's fault. It's what's dropped on the land that washes into the harbour through the streams and stormwater system. That's where the problem comes from." Roads and Maritime Services has crews working on Sydney waters for 12 hours a day, seven days a week to clean up the rubbish — which is particularly bad after heavy rain. Environmental officer Graham Phillis said: "All the stormwater drains just back up full of rubbish and stuff. "When it rains it just floods the whole harbour and then we're just absolutely flat out."

In a statement, the NSW Environment Minister's office confirmed it was looking at a national approach to reduce the impact of plastic bags.

Meanwhile the turtle Cliff is slowly gaining weight and preparing to go home. "He's quite feisty believe it or not and he swims around the pool and he's really improved a huge amount," Ms Hall said. The turtle's rehabilitation pool is clear and clean. Cliff's carers are worried because they cannot guarantee he will be safe from plastic when he returns to the ocean.

Source: www.abc.net.au, 12 February 2017

Not even the world's deepest Ocean trenches are free of Pollution, scientists discover

Scientists have discovered the presence of chemical pollutants in some of the ocean's deepest trenches, previously thought to be nearly untouched by human influence. In fact, they've found levels of contamination in some marine organisms living there that rival some of the most polluted waterways on the planet. The findings, presented on Monday in the journal *Nature Ecology and Evolution*, underscore the idea that different parts of the ocean may be far more interconnected than previously thought - and that dangerous forms of pollution may be pervasive even in the most remote places.

The researchers, from the University of Aberdeen and the James Hutton Institute in the UK, focused on two specific types of chemical pollutants: polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, and polybrominated diphenyl ethers, or PBDEs, both of which may cause a variety of adverse health effects, including neurological, immune and reproductive issues and even cancer (in humans). PCBs were once commonly used in electrical equipment before being banned in the United States over health and environmental concerns in the 1970s. The manufacture and import of PBDEs, which are typically used as flame retardants, has also been restricted in the US, although at least one common type of the chemical is still permitted.

Despite the reductions in their use, both PCBs and and PBDEs can still be detected in marine organisms today. Both have the potential to remain intact for long periods of time, often binding to other particles in the water that can then carry them throughout the ocean. They also have a tendency to "bioaccumulate," meaning they can build up in marine organisms over time. Just last year, a study conducted by researchers from the Scripps Institution of Oceanography suggested that certain organic pollutants, including PCBs and PBDEs, are widespread in fish throughout the world.

For the new study, the researchers checked for the presence of these chemicals in two of the world's deepest ocean trenches - the Mariana trench in the Western Pacific, near the Mariana islands, and the Kermadec trench north of New Zealand. To do so, the researchers deployed special devices called "deep-sea landers," which are small vessels that are released from ships and drop to the bottom of the ocean before floating back up to the surface. Each lander was equipped with special traps designed to catch tiny shrimp-like crustaceans called amphipods known to inhabit some of the ocean's deepest and most extreme environments. Afterwards, the researchers tested the amphipods for the presence of PCBs and PBDEs.

They found that both PCBs and PBDEs were present in all species of amphipod in both trenches, and at all depths sampled - up to 10,000 metres deep in both locations. Concentrations tended to be somewhat higher in the Mariana trench, although in both locations they were generally higher than the baseline concentrations typically found in clean coastal areas. In fact, in the Mariana trench, the highest observed concentrations of PCBs were about 50 times greater than the levels that have been found in crabs living near China's Liaohe River, one of that nation's most polluted waterways.

"The only Northwest Pacific location with values comparable to the Mariana Trench is Suruga Bay (Japan)," the researchers note in the paper, "a highly industrialised area with historically heavy usage of organochlorine chemicals." These are bombshell results, given that the deep sea is often thought of as one of the world's last pristine places, mostly out of the reach of human influence. In a comment also published Monday, marine ecologist Katherine Dafforn of the University of New South Wales highlighted the importance of the findings, noting that the authors " have provided clear evidence that the deep ocean, rather than being remote, is highly connected to surface waters and has been exposed to significant concentrations of human-made pollutants."

What remains unclear is exactly how the contaminants got into the trenches - and why their levels are so high in the Mariana. The authors suspect one of the more likely explanations is that the chemicals in the Mariana trench originated around the "great Pacific garbage patch," a swirling mass of debris in the northern Pacific. Chemical pollutants in that region could easily cling to plastic waste as it drops through the water column toward the bottom of the ocean.

More generally, the authors note that large-scale ocean currents can transport chemical-carrying particles over long distances. And previous research has suggested that even contaminants which start out on the surface of the ocean can sink to the deepest places, clinging to garbage or even the bodies of dead animals, within a few months. All of this is to say that "our proximity to these extreme locations is far from remote, which is why even the deepest chasms of the ocean are no longer pristine," the authors note in the paper.

Future research may shed more light on how these contaminants may move and magnify throughout the food chain, as well as whether they could be causing any measurable damage to the ecosystems they enter. But for now, the findings serve as a jarring reminder that human activities have consequences all over the planet -- and there may nowhere that remains out of our reach.

Source: www.newsjs.com, 14 February 2017



Game-changers ahead on the (long) Maritime Silk Road

From the Bab al-Mandab to the strait of Malacca, from the strait of Hormuz to the strait of Lombok, all the way to the key logistical hub of Diego Garcia 2,500 miles southeast of Hormuz, the question pops up: How will the unpredictable new normal in Washington – which is not exactly China-friendly – affect the wider Indian Ocean?

At play are way more than key chokepoints in an area that straddles naval supply chains and through which also flows almost 40% of the oil that powers Asian-Pacific economies. This is about the future of the Maritime Silk Road, a key component of the Chinese One Belt, One Road (OBOR), and thus about how Big Power politics will unfold in a key realm of the Rimland.

India imports almost 80% of its energy from the Middle East via the Indian Ocean. Thus, for Delhi, protection of supply chains must be the norm, as in the current drive to develop three carrier battle groups and at least 160 naval vessels, including submarines, before 2022. That also implies boosting a cooperation agreement with the nations bordering the strait of Malacca – Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia – and developing military infrastructure in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

China for its part advances a relentless economic / infrastructural drive from Myanmar to Pakistan, from Bangladesh to the Maldives, from Sri Lanka to Djibouti – a counterbalance to the impossibility of fully implementing “escape from Malacca”, the complex, multi-pronged Beijing strategy for diversifying energy supplies. The privileged infrastructure connectivity hub remains the megaport of Gwadar in the Arabian Sea – which will be controlled for the next 40 years by a Chinese company. Gwadar is the naval destination of the US\$46 billion (and counting) China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) originating in Xinjiang, which will be the economic New Silk Roads game-changer in South Asia.

This implies everyone jumping aboard the new Karakoram highway, currently under construction in Pakistan’s sublimely mountainous northern Gilgit-Baltistan, with the military watching over a frantic maze of Chinese engineers.

Islamabad/Rawalpindi took no prisoners in offering a sprawling support system to prevent possible interference by Uighur separatist groups. For all practical purposes, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) is now focused on resident Uighurs in Pakistan like a laser, while not forgetting Balochistan's separatist groups, who, with the right "incentive", might also derail CPEC further on down the road.

Beijing treads a very fine – soft power – line. Islamabad offered the Chinese Navy a base in Gwadar, but was politely declined: the graphic message would totally freak out both Delhi and Washington. Gwadar will be inevitably developed over time as a trade hub for a vast swathe of South Asia, but Delhi's anxieties relate to its virtually ready-to-roll capability for monitoring the Indian Navy in the Indian Ocean and the US Navy in the Persian Gulf.

Go North-South, young Eurasian

Gwadar happens to be not far away from Chabahar, in Iran – which is being designed as an Indian trade hub towards the markets of Central Asia, connecting India with Afghanistan via Iran and thus bypassing Pakistan. That's the Southern – or Indian – Silk Road in action. Gwadar and Chabahar are the top two new hubs bound to link the Indian Ocean to central Eurasia, with Iran, India and Russia featuring as key members of the slowly-developing but potentially spectacular International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

Moreover, Iran, China and India may all eventually converge towards a free trade zone with the Russia-led Eurasia Economic Union (EEU), as the CPEC for its part will allow Russia and Central Asia to boost trade with the Indian Ocean Rimland. Then there's the fascinating case of Sri Lanka. According to the Institute of Policy Studies in Sri Lanka, from 2006 to 2015 China invested over US\$5 billion, with Sri Lanka's minister of development strategies and international trade adding that China has pledged over US\$10 billion more up to 2019.

The key project is the deep-sea port at Hambantota – plus an international airport in nearby Mattala. Sri Lanka struck a deal with China Merchants Port Holdings at the end of 2016 to sell 80% of Hambantota for US\$1.1 billion and to lease 15,000 acres of nearby land for 99 years. Needless to add, the proverbial "concern" with this Chinese win-win was registered in both Delhi and Washington. The possibility that China will eventually acquire a permanent naval military base in the Indian Ocean is a full-time

obsession of US Think Tankland. Colombo, though, has always been adamant: Chinese-financed infrastructure does not imply basing rights for the Chinese Navy.

In fact, any Chinese move – from leasing a Maldives island for 50 years for US\$4 million to building a military base in Djibouti (officially a base for “technical and logistical support” to the Chinese Navy) by the end of 2017, close to the Americans and the French, is a source of “concern”. Where China in South Asia is concerned, the Pentagon / Naval War College always fall back to the “string of pearls” threat. Especially now with the Maritime Silk Road, a “string of pearls” is a categorical imperative for Beijing. But that does not imply Chinese military hegemony.

For Beijing, conscious of cost-efficiency, the logistical nightmare of maintaining naval bases in foreign lands far, far away from the Middle Kingdom is definitely not a win-win. So, the notion of having a Chinese carrier battle group in the Indian Ocean ready to confront the Indian Navy is idle geostrategic speculation. The very long game is all about establishing key trade nodes for the Maritime Silk Road.

I got a naval offer you can't refuse

It will be fascinating to watch how mechanisms such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) develop. Let's see what Delhi – deeply committed to an official Make in India campaign – may offer in the way of “free” markets to Nepal (which is leaning towards China), Bangladesh (always in a complex relationship with Pakistan) and Sri Lanka.

Since 2008, China has been India's largest trading partner. China and India will be involved in deeper cooperation inside the BRICS, and in managing the New Development Bank (NDB). Moreover, India is about to become a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The notion of Delhi reigning supreme in the Indian Ocean is misguided. From now on, with the emphasis on the Maritime Silk Road, it will be more a case of serious India-China economic competition and/or cooperation, as both countries invest in the protection/expansion of their extensive, complex supply chains.

The Pentagon, under James “Mad Dog” Mattis, will, of course, be watching closely. India's NDTV recently reported that the US Pacific Command had tacitly admitted the obvious: that the US and India are sharing intel on Chinese warships and submarines in the Indo-Pacific. Moreover, there was a hint that Beijing could deploy a carrier

battle group in the Indian Ocean today if it saw fit. It's unlikely Beijing will accept the challenge – just to be slapped with more charges of “Chinese aggression” and “threatening freedom of navigation”. Better invest in non-stop, cumulative Maritime Silk Road deals.

Source: www.atimes.com, 2 February 2017

The ‘Indo-Pacific’ Concept: Retrospect and Prospect

-Gurpreet S Khurana

It is now precisely a decade since the concept of ‘Indo-Pacific’ was proposed by the author. It was the first time, at least in recent decades, that the concept was introduced and explained in an academic paper titled ‘Security of Sea Lines: Prospects for India-Japan Cooperation’ published in the January 2007 edition of *Strategic Analyses* journal of the *Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses* (IDSA), New Delhi.ⁱ Since 2010, the concept of ‘Indo-Pacific’ has gained increasing prevalence in the geopolitical/ strategic discourse, and is now being used increasingly by policy-makers, analysts and academics in Asia and beyond.

The term ‘Indo-Pacific’ combines the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and the Western Pacific region (WP) – inclusive of the contiguous seas off East and Southeast Asia – into a singular regional construct. There are some variations based on specific preferences of countries. For instance, the United States (US) prefers to use the term ‘Indo-Asia-Pacific’, to encompass the entire swath of Indian and Pacific oceans, thereby enabling the US inclusiveness for it to maintain its relevance as a resident power in this important region. Nonetheless, the fundamental ‘idea’ of ‘Indo-Pacific’ is accepted nearly universally. It has been argued that the concept of the Indo-Pacific may lead to a change in popular "mental maps" of how the world is understood in strategic terms.ⁱⁱ

It may be conceded that there are some fundamental and distinct differences between the IOR and the WP in terms of geopolitics - including the geo-economics that shape geopolitics – and even the security environment. If so, how did the concept of ‘Indo-Pacific’ take root? It is a conceptual ‘aberration’? What was the underlying rationale behind the use of the term? This essay seeks to examine these pertinent issues.

Furthermore, based on current trends, the analysis presents a prognosis on the future relevance of the 'Indo-Pacific' concept.

Indian Ocean-Western Pacific Divergences

Undeniably, the IOR and the WP differ substantially in nearly all aspects, ranging from the levels of economic development of countries and their social parameters, to the security environment. Unlike the IOR, the WP has been beset by major traditional (military) threats. Such insecurity is based on historical factors, mainly flowing from the adverse actions of dominant military powers, particularly since the advent of the 20th century – for instance, Japan; and now increasingly, China – resulting in heightened nationalism and an attempt to redraw sovereign boundaries, including 'territorialisation' of the seas. The military dominance of these powers was a consequence of their economic progress, beginning with Japan, which later helped the other East Asian economies to grow through outsourcing of lower-end manufacturing industries – the so-called 'Flying Geese Paradigm'.ⁱⁱⁱ

In contrast, the recent history of the IOR is not chequered by onslaught of any dominant and assertive local power. Why so? Despite being rich in natural resources – particularly hydrocarbons – the IOR countries were severely constrained to develop their economies. Not only did the colonial rule of western powers last longer in the IOR, but also that these countries were too diverse in all aspects, and were never self-compelled to integrate themselves economically; and therefore, lagged behind East Asia substantially in terms of economic progress. As a result, many of these countries could not even acquire adequate capacity to govern and regulate human activity in their sovereign territories/maritime zones, let alone developing capabilities for military assertion against their neighbours. Therefore, the numerous maritime disputes in the IOR remain dormant, and have not yet translated into military insecurities. (The India-Pakistan contestation is among the rare exceptions, and is based on a very different causative factor). The IOR is plagued more by non-traditional security issues, such as piracy, organised crime involving drugs and small-arms, illegal fishing, irregular migration, and human smuggling.

The Rationale

The broader rationale behind the prevalence of the ‘Indo-Pacific’ concept is the increasing developments in the area spanning the entire ‘maritime underbelly’ of Asia, ranging from the East African littoral to Northeast Asia. This is best exemplified by the launch of the US-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) in 2004 to counter the sea-borne proliferation of WMDs and their delivery systems. The PSI focused on the maritime swath stretching from Iran and Syria to North Korea.^{iv} These developments led strategic analysts to search for a suitable common regional nomenclature to be able to communicate more effectively. The term ‘Asia’ was too broad and heterogeneous; and ‘continental’ rather than ‘maritime’. The term ‘Asia-Pacific’ – which traditionally stood for ‘the Asian littoral of the Pacific Ocean’ – was inadequate.^v The ‘Indo-Pacific’ – shortened from ‘Indian Ocean–Pacific Ocean combine’ – seemed more appropriate.

The coinage of ‘Indo-Pacific’ has much to do with the increased eminence of India with the turn of the 21st century; beginning in the 1990s with its impressive economic growth and later, its nuclear weaponisation. In 2006, Donald Berlin wrote that the ‘rise of India’ is itself a key factor in the increasing significance of the Indian Ocean.^{vi} Also, India could no longer be excluded from any overarching reckoning in the Asia-Pacific; be it economic or security related. For example, India was an obvious choice for inclusion in the ASEAN Regional Forum (in 1996) and the East Asia Summit (in 2005). Even for the PSI (2004), President Bush sought to enrol India as a key participant through its PACOM. Though India was located in US PACOM’s area of responsibility; ‘technically’, it did not belong to the Asia-Pacific. During the Shangri, La Dialogue 2009, India’s former naval chief Admiral Arun Prakash highlighted this contradiction, saying,

“I am not quite sure about the origin of the term Asia-Pacific, but I presume it was coined to include America in this part of the world, which is perfectly all right. As an Indian, every time I hear the term Asia-Pacific I feel a sense of exclusion, because it seems to include north east Asia, south east Asia and the Pacific islands, and it terminates at the Melaka Straits, but there is a whole world west of the Melaka Straits....so my question to the distinguished panel is do you see a contradiction between the terms Asia-Pacific, Asia and the Indian Ocean region?”

The ‘Indo-Pacific’ concept helped to overcome this complexity by incorporating ‘India’ in the affairs of ‘maritime-Asia’, even though the ‘Indo-’ in the compound word ‘Indo-Pacific’ stands for the ‘Indian Ocean’, and not ‘India’.

Since long, the IOR had been a maritime-conduit of hydrocarbons to fuel the economic prosperity of the WP littoral countries, which was another significant linkage between the IOR and the WP, and provided much ballast to the rationale of 'Indo-Pacific'. In context of China's economic 'rise' leading to its enhanced military power and assertiveness, this linkage represented Beijing's strategic vulnerability, and thereby an opportunity for deterring Chinese aggressiveness. Ironically, China's strategic vulnerability was expressed by the Chinese President Hu Jintao himself in November 2003 through his coinage of "Malacca Dilemma", wherein "certain major powers" were bent on controlling the strait.^{vii} The reference to India was implicit, yet undeniable. In his book '*Samudramanthan*' (2012), Raja Mohan says, "India-China maritime rivalry finds its sharpest expression in the Bay of Bengal, the South China Sea and the Malacca Strait...", which demonstrates the interconnectedness of "the two different realms (of) Pacific and Indian Ocean(s)".^{viii}

The Genesis

Against the backdrop of strengthening India-Japan political ties following the 2006 reciprocal visits of the two countries' apex leaders, Indian and Japanese think-tanks had intensified their discussions on strategic and maritime cooperation. At one of the brainstorming sessions held at the IDSA in October 2006, the participants took note of China's strategic vulnerability in terms of its 'Malacca Dilemma', and sought to stretch its sense of insecurity eastwards to the IOR with the objective of restraining China's politico-military assertiveness against its Asian neighbours.

Besides, Japan itself was vulnerable due to its rather heavy dependence on seaborne energy and food imports across the IOR, and thus sought an enhanced maritime security role in the area in cooperation with India. During the discussions at IDSA, a clear concord was reached that the IOR and the WP cannot possibly be treated separately, either for maritime security, or even in geopolitical terms. It was during that event that the 'Indo-Pacific' concept was casually discussed, which led to the publication of the January 2007 paper in *Strategic Analyses* (as mentioned above). Interestingly, a few months later in August 2007, the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe addressed the Indian Parliament, speaking of the "Confluence of the Indian and Pacific Oceans" as "the dynamic coupling as seas of freedom and of prosperity" in the "broader Asia".^{ix}

In 2010, the US officially recognized 'Indo-Pacific' for the first time. Speaking at Honolulu, the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton spoke about "expanding our work

with the Indian Navy in the Pacific, because we understand how important the Indo-Pacific basin is to global trade and commerce”.^x

In 2012, the Australian analyst Rory Medcalf wrote that he was convinced that the “Indo-Pacific (is) a term whose time has come”. A year later in 2013, Australia released its Defence White Paper, which carried the first government articulation of the ‘Indo-Pacific’ concept.^{xi} Soon thereafter, Rory Medcalf endorsed India’s centrality in the Indo-Pacific construct stating that “Australia’s new defence policy recognises India’s eastward orientation.”^{xii}

China was initially circumspect of the ‘Indo-Pacific’ coinage. As the Australian writers, Nick Bisley and Andrew Phillips wrote in 2012,

“...Viewed from Beijing, the idea of the Indo-Pacific...appears to be to keep the US in, lift India up, and keep China out of the Indian Ocean... (which is why), the Indo-Pacific concept has...received a frosty reception in China...”^{xiii}

In July 2013, a Chinese scholar Zhao Qinghai trashed the ‘Indo-Pacific’ concept on the basis of his interpretation of it being an “India too” geopolitical construct.^{xiv} Notwithstanding, not all Chinese scholars have been dismissive of the concept. In June 2013, Minghao Zhao wrote,

“...And it is true that a power game of great significance has unfolded in Indo-Pacific Asia. The US, India, Japan and other players are seeking to collaborate to build an “Indo-Pacific order” that is congenial to their long-term interests. China is not necessarily excluded from this project, and it should seek a seat at the table and help recast the strategic objectives and interaction norms (in China’s favour).”^{xv}

Interestingly, in November 2014, the *Global Times*, an official Chinese English-language daily carried a commentary cautioning India on the ‘Indo-Pacific’ concept. It said that the Indo-Pacific concept has not been endorsed by the “Indian government and scholars”, but scripted by the United States and its allies “to balance and even contain China’s increasing influence in the Asia-Pacific region and the Indian Ocean”, and who have made India a “linchpin” in the geo-strategic system. Paradoxically, however, the commentary was titled “New Delhi-Beijing Cooperation Key to Building an Indo-Pacific Era”.^{xvi}

Prognosis

It emerges from the foregoing that the current prevalence of the 'Indo-Pacific' concept is premised upon – and necessitated by – the growing inter-connectedness between the IOR and WP, rather than any similarities in their characteristics. This leads to another pertinent question: What would be the relevance of the concept in the coming years?

According to preliminary indicators, the relevance of the 'Indo-Pacific' concept may enhance in future due to the strengthening linkages between the IOR and the WP. Events and developments in one part of the 'Indo-Pacific' are likely to increasingly affect countries located in the other part. Furthermore, over the decades, the growing trade and people-to-people connectivity between the IOR and WP countries may benefit the IOR, and slowly iron out the dissimilarities in terms of economic and human development indices.

China's 'Maritime Silk Road' (MSR) and India's outreach to its extended eastern neighbourhood through its 'Act East' policy could contribute substantially towards the economic integration of the IOR and the WP. Indonesia's putative role is also noteworthy. It is an archipelagic country that straddles the 'Indo Pacific' with sea coast facing both the IOR and the WP. Possessing substantial potential to become a major maritime power, Indonesia is likely to be a key player in the process of melting the IOR-WP divide, and thereby reinforcing the 'Indo-Pacific' construct.

Over the decades, the current dissimilarities between the IOR and the WP in terms of the security environment may also diminish, if not vanish altogether. Greater economic prosperity in the IOR is likely to be followed by increasing stakes in the maritime domain, besides the ability to develop naval capabilities. The hitherto 'dormant' maritime disputes in IOR could become 'active'. Furthermore, the MSR could be accompanied by China's invigorated efforts towards naval development to fructify its 'Two-Ocean Strategy'.^{xvii} China's intensified naval presence in the IOR could lead to increased likelihood of acrimony due to its politico-military involvement in regional instabilities and maritime disputes. It may also cause the PLA Navy to increase its activities in the maritime zones of IOR countries, and have unintended encounters at sea with the naval forces of other established powers, leading to enhanced maritime-military insecurities. In such a scenario, the 'Indo-Pacific' concept would be essential to manage the regional developments and integrate China into the established norms of conduct in the IOR.

In the broader sense, as India's leading strategist Uday Bhaskar avers, "In the global context, the Pacific and the Indian oceans are poised to acquire greater strategic salience for the major powers of the 21st century, three among whom – the China, India and the US – are located in Asia".^{xviii} Indeed, a holistic treatment of the Indian-Pacific Ocean continuum would be required to assess the evolving balance of power in Asia, and to address the fault-lines therein, with the overarching aim of preserving regional and global stability.

Source: maritimeindia.org, 02 February 2017

Forging strategic ties with US

On January 18, two days before the inauguration of US President Donald Trump, US Pacific Commander, Admiral Harry Harris, delivered an important message in Delhi. Speaking at the second Raisina Dialogue, he said that the incoming US defence team "understands the importance of the region (Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean). They assured me that the Carter (outgoing Defence Secretary Ashton Carter) view will transcend the new administration."

Admiral Harris emphasised the need for the US and India "to shape the New Normal and uphold the rules-based international order". What this meant was that, instead of allowing China to shape a new security architecture in the region, the US would, along with its allies and partners, ensure that China abides by the agreed international rules including Freedom of Navigation (FON) across the two Oceans (western Pacific and Indian Ocean). "Shared domains will not be closed down", he asserted. Making a strong case for working together, Admiral Harris said that the US' objective was the same as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region) for the benefit of the region.

In a one-on-one interaction with me in March 2015, the Admiral had said that "the US considers India as the pivot in the Indian Ocean". Explaining re-balancing or the pivot to Asia, he had asserted, "Re-balancing is real. By the end of 2020, the US will have 300 ships, 60 per cent of which will be in the Pacific (55 per cent are presently in the region), while 60 per cent of the submarines are already here. We will invest in new capabilities and strengthen our alliances and partnerships." He had, however, added, "Re-balancing serves diplomatic, economic, strategic and military interests. However,

the most important component is economic not military. We will have a forward presence when it comes to humanitarian needs and for this we will have bilateral readiness programmes with various countries.”

Admiral Harris’ position, it seems, might soon alter under the Trump Administration. While rejecting the Trans-Pacific Partnership (the lynchpin of trade), and by signalling a trade war with China, President Trump has announced the strengthening of US military, especially Navy power.

This could imply a substantive shift in the US’ rebalancing strategy: From economic to military. What does this mean for India? That pressure from the US and China on India for maritime security will increase. According to Admiral Harris, the US wants its Navy to develop multilateral cooperation (to include Japan and perhaps Australia) for interoperability — capability to fight together for common mission — with the Indian Navy, and for the latter to assume the lead for the security of Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOC) in the Indian Ocean. To do so, the two Navies should ideally have common equipment and combined training.

The US’ 2016 designation of India as a Major Defence Partner and the 2012 Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) are meant to develop equipment compatibility. The US would encourage India to buy its military hardware; the DTTI is meant to co-develop equipment with India for the latter to become a major link in the US global defence supply chain, and to help India develop its own military industrial complex.

Joint patrols require that India go beyond the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), which was signed in 2016 after 12 years of excruciating negotiations. India would be required to sign two additional hold-out agreements — Communication Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) — for good operational (bilateral and multilateral) cooperation. Without mincing words, The Admiral made it clear at the Raisina Dialogue he hoped India would set the pace in frustrating bureaucratic delays in signing the hold-out agreements.

For India, the problem is not at the bureaucratic but policy level, since the Modi Government has adopted a hedging posture towards the US and China. Without declaring China as its adversary, India wants to use the US card to neutralise Chinese growing footprints in the Indian Ocean. New Delhi is conscious of its limited strategic

options on land in Jammu & Kashmir where the China-Pakistan nexus and its own appeasement policy since 1988 towards Beijing has foreclosed its strategic options. Piggy-backing on the US' military power, India now hopes to project itself as a leading power through its Act East policy in the contentious region where the US and China rivalry for global supremacy is unfolding.

China, however, means business. This is evident from the unfolding South China Sea (SCS) dispute where since 2014, the reality is not what is being projected by the US. For instance, the SCS dispute is not about massive untapped resources in the SCS that China would be unwilling to share with the 10 smaller Asean countries. It is also not about freedom of navigation through the world's busiest sea lanes of communications that the US, with its pivot or rebalancing to Asia, proposes to safeguard against a belligerent China. For China, it is about breaking free from its strategic confinement to gain unfettered access to the Western Pacific. To be the foremost power in Asia, China must become a maritime power.

For this reason, while demolishing the myth of it being India's own waters, China has expanded its footprints in the Indian Ocean region. It started with the so-called 'string of pearls' strategy in 2005, where China assisted small littoral states in the Indian Ocean region with infrastructure development and financial and military assistance. The unveiling of the 21st century Maritime Silk Road project, in 2013, included Myanmar, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Seychelles, Djibouti and of course, Pakistan's Gwadar which would be the hub of China's commercial-cum-military activities.

Given the above scenario where India would be required to disclose its strategic posture regarding the Indian Ocean, it should weigh its options at the earliest. Behaving like a leading power — which it is not since it lacks credible Naval power — would require it to protect the SLOC in the Indian Ocean with US' support. Since the Chinese maritime One Road passed exactly along these SLOC, a clash of interest between India and China cannot be ruled out, with serious implications on the land disputed border between the two. Dilly-dallying on signing the hold-out agreements with the US will prevent both sides from undertaking meaningful bilateral and multilateral Naval interactions, let alone joint patrols. At a time when maritime threat, given the interoperability between the Chinese and Pakistani Navies, has increased, this will not help India's territorial integrity and Act East policy.

Source: www.dailypioneer.com, 02 February 2017

Trump Defense Chief Seeks Diplomatic Push in South China Sea

iplomatic efforts should be exhausted to resolve the South China Sea dispute, said U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis, weeks after Secretary of State Rex Tillerson appeared to advocate a tougher stance. Speaking in Tokyo after a meeting with Japanese Defense Minister Tomomi Inada, Mattis accused China of "shredding the trust" of its neighbors. He said freedom of navigation remained absolute and that all nations should "play by the rules." "What we have to do is exhaust all efforts, diplomatic efforts, to try and resolve this properly," Mattis told reporters. "Our military stance should be one that reinforces our diplomats," he said, adding that "at this time we do not see any need for dramatic military moves at all." China claims more than 80 percent of the South China Sea, where it has constructed features on seven rocks and reefs and installed military facilities. Several Southeast Asian nations and Taiwan also claim parts of the area, through which more than \$5 trillion of trade passes each year.

Last month, Tillerson provoked a sharp rebuke from China when he said the U.S. should send a clear signal that further island-building should stop, and that China's future "access to those islands is also not going to be allowed."

Providing Reassurance

In the first overseas trip by a member of Donald Trump's cabinet, Mattis sought to reassure officials in South Korea and Japan that the new administration will stand by both alliances. Concern had grown after Trump accused the two nations of failing to pay enough for U.S. protection. Both countries rely on the U.S. "nuclear umbrella" to deter threats from China and North Korea. Mattis also reaffirmed the longstanding U.S. view that East China Sea islands disputed by Japan and China are administered by Japan and are therefore covered by the U.S.-Japan security treaty. Four Chinese coastguard vessels were spotted close to Japan-administered waters around the uninhabited isles known as Senkaku in Japanese and Diaoyu in Chinese on Saturday, according to the Japan Coast Guard.

Cold-War Relic

China lashed out at the U.S.-Japan alliance as a "result of the Cold War" after Mattis met Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Friday. Abe is set to meet Trump in

Washington on Feb. 10. "The Diaoyu islands have been a Chinese territory in history," foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said. "We urge the U.S. to take a responsible attitude, stop making wrong comments on the sovereignty of the Diaoyu islands to avoid further complication of related issues and avoid bringing regional instability," he said.

Source: www.bloomberg.com, 04 February 2017

Will Trump's Next Iran Sanctions Target China's Banks?

-Gordon G. Chang

Friday, the U.S. Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control sanctioned individuals and companies in three networks for "procuring technology and/or materials to support Iran's ballistic missile program." The measures are partly in reaction to Iran's January 29 test of an intermediate-range missile. One of the three networks, headed by Iranian businessman Abdollah Asgharzadeh, contains Chinese individuals and their companies.

CNN reports that the Trump administration is planning at least another round of Iran sanctions. Those measures could—and should—hit Chinese banks. Unplugging Chinese financial institutions will shock global markets, but measures that leave them untouched will be ineffective. Asgharzadeh, according to Treasury, has had dealings since 2013 with three "China-based brokers," Richard Yue, Jack Qin, and Carol Zhou. Yue works with Cosailing Business Trading Company, which provides, among other things, financial services to Asgharzadeh. Qin uses Ningbo New Century Import and Export Company to ship goods to the Iranian.

The sanctions imposed Friday on the three individuals and the two companies were initiated by the Obama administration and reflect decades-old attitudes about the best method of stopping Chinese proliferation. There are, however, two principal problems with these measures, which were designed to gently warn but not to inflict severe cost.

First, the most recent sanctions, like those in the past, were imposed on small fry. China's small-fry individuals and entities for decades have been selling equipment, components, materials, and technology to Iran for its ballistic missile and nuclear

weapons programs. Beijing maintains one of the world's most sophisticated monitoring systems of people inside its borders, so it either knows of the activities of proliferators on its soil or decides not to know. Either way, it is at the very least complicit in proliferant activity.

Source: www.forbes.com, 05 February 2017

Retrieving Kachchatheevu for India: A Non-Starter?

-Alyona Seth

The encroachment by Tamil Nadu fishermen in Sri Lankan waters in search of profitable catch and their detention by the Sri Lankan Navy have often caused friction in Indo-Sri Lankan ties. In order to maintain amiable bilateral relations, concurrent with India's "Neighbourhood First" policy, resolving this fishing dispute has assumed greater significance. During his March 2016 visit to Sri Lanka, Prime Minister Modi labeled the dispute a "livelihood and humanitarian concern" requiring a long-term solution.^{xix}

The government of Tamil Nadu alleges that the Indo-Sri Lankan fishing dispute is a direct consequence of the "unlawful" ceding of Kachchatheevu to Sri Lanka. Kachchatheevu is a small barren island in the Palk bay contested by Indian Tamil and Sri Lankan Tamil fishermen from the northern provinces. The rich fisheries, now depleted on the Indian side, have been the traditional fishing grounds for fishermen from both countries. The island lies in Sri Lankan waters under the terms of a bilateral treaty signed in 1974.

This issue brief analyses the contentious issue of Kachchatheevu by examining the delineation of the maritime boundary with Sri Lanka and the contrasting claims of the Tamil Nadu and central government with regards to Kachchatheevu. It aims to examine to what extent the issue of Kachchatheevu plays a role in the fishery contention between the two countries.

Background

The negotiations between Sri Lanka and India on the settlement of their maritime boundaries, specifically in the Palk Bay, were propelled by the camaraderie enjoyed by then Indian PM Indira Gandhi and her Sri Lankan counterpart Mrs. Srimavo Bandaranaike.

In the 1970s, Mrs. Bandaranaike was at the receiving end of harsh criticism on the Tamil ethnic issue, higher cost of living and labour unrest. Seeking diplomatic means to silence her critics, she approached Mrs. Indira Gandhi and the matter pertaining to the delineation of historic waters and Kachchatheevu was settled between the two countries.^{xx} In Palk Bay, adjustments were made to the equidistant line, because of which, Kachchatheevu fell on the Sri Lankan side.^{xxi}

Equidistant lines are often corrected for equitability. In establishing maritime boundaries, international norm governs that “delimitation is to be effected by the application of equitable criteria” in a manner “capable of ensuring an equitable result.”^{xxii} In the 1974 Indo-Sri Lanka agreement, India recognized Sri Lanka’s sovereignty over Kachchatheevu whilst gaining sovereignty over Wadge Bank in return.^{xxiii} This decision was undertaken in order to cement friendly relations between the two countries and prevent ties from souring in the future over the relatively minor matter of the small uninhabited island. Furthermore, India was averse to approaching the International Court of Justice or involving a third party to settle the issue.^{xxiv}

Between India and Sri Lanka, three agreements were signed on the maritime boundary but only the 1974 and 1976 agreements are relevant to the fishing dispute. The 1974 treaty safeguarded the traditional rights of Indian Tamil pilgrims and fishermen to visit the island without travel documentation. Do visiting rights without travel documentation (Article 5) and traditional rights (Article 6) allow fishing in waters around Kachchatheevu which falls under Sri Lanka’s jurisdiction? The treaty fails to elaborate upon “such rights as they have traditionally enjoyed” leaving it open to often contrary interpretation.^{xxv} The subsequent agreement signed in 1976, on the other hand, restricted fishermen’s rights to fishing to only their home country’s waters.^{xxvi} Does the 1976 agreement, on the settlement of maritime boundary in the Gulf of Mannar and Bay of Bengal, supersede the 1974 agreement? The ambiguity pertaining to the two treaties lies at the heart of the current dispute between India and Sri Lanka, and the Tamil Nadu and central governments.

Each year, a large number of Indian fishermen are apprehended by the Sri Lankan authorities. From 1983 to 2009, about 250 fishermen were killed by the Sri Lankan

Navy and several hundreds injured, their equipment damaged and their catch pillaged.^{xxvii} According to the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), in 2012, the Sri Lankan Navy nabbed 197 Indian fishermen, followed by 676 in 2013, 787 in 2015 and 235 in the first half of 2016. In recent years, the Sri Lankan authorities have taken to retaining trawlers, even after the release of the imprisoned fishermen has been secured by the Indian government. However, as is evident by the increasing number of arrests, the steps taken by Sri Lanka have done little to deter Indian fishermen from crossing the IMBL.

Tamil Nadu versus Central Government

Tamil Nadu's Claims

Tamil Nadu asserts that Kachchatheevu is an integral part of India on historical, geographical and cultural grounds. Kachchatheevu fell under the Ramanthapuram Zamindari, ruled by the Sethupathis, as documented by the Ramanathapuram Registrar's Office. Furthermore, Tamil Nadu contends that in 1845, the Governor of Ceylon (as Sri Lanka was formerly known) had acknowledged Sethupathi Dynasty's territorial right over the islet in certain documents.^{xxviii} On this basis, the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, the Late Ms. Jayalalitha had filed a petition in 2008 in the Supreme Court challenging the constitutional legitimacy of the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL).^{xxix} In 2013, a unanimous resolution seeking the retrieval of Kachchatheevu was passed in the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly. The petition is sub judice in the Supreme Court.

Central Government's Stance

Described by Indira Gandhi as a "sheer rock with no strategic significance", she could not have foreseen the animosity this uninhabited island would generate amongst Tamils from both sides of the border which continues to haunt India-Sri Lanka relations today.^{xxx} Subsequent governments have held a similar view with regards to Kachchatheevu.

The central government perceives Kachchatheevu to be a settled issue. In response to a RTI application filed, the Ministry of External Affairs responded by stating that the two agreements (1974 and 1976) "did not involve either acquiring or ceding of territory belonging to India since the area in question had never been demarcated."^{xxxi} In another instance the Centre had reiterated its stance by filing an affidavit in the

Supreme Court stating “no territory belonging to India was ceded nor sovereignty relinquished since the area in question was in dispute and had never been demarcated.”^{xxxii} In the same affidavit, the Centre also dismissed Tamil Nadu’s claim that the 1974 Agreement safeguarded the fishing rights of Indian Tamils, as outlined in Article 5 and 6 of the bilateral treaty. The Indian Coast Guard, in an affidavit to the Madras High Court in 2015, stated that Indian fishermen crossing into Sri Lankan waters partook in illegal activities, namely peddling of contraband and banned trawling methods causing damage to Sri Lankan fishing equipment.^{xxxiii}

Kachchatheevu as a ‘Band-Aid’

The Question of Livelihood

Fishermen from Tamil Nadu are predominantly employed as daily wage labourers on trawlers owned by big businessmen.^{xxxiv} These fishermen are compelled into fishing in waters with more profitable catch. According to one report, an estimated 40 percent of the total recorded catch in Tamil Nadu is poached from Sri Lankan waters.^{xxxv} They risk arrest and alleged mistreatment by the Sri Lankan Navy so as to meet the demands of their employers. The alternative is to lose their jobs. The trawlers used by Indian Tamil fishermen generate employment for at least 25 people, which makes it highly unlikely that they will revert to traditional fishing.

An estimated 200,000 Sri Lankan Tamils from the northern provinces are dependent on the waters in Palk Bay to make ends meet.^{xxxvi} Following the end of the civil war in 2009, in an effort to resume their occupation, the fishermen set out to sea but were met with mechanized bottom trawlers operated by Indian Tamils who were encroaching in Sri Lankan waters. These bottom trawlers not only destroy the seabed and marine ecosystem but tear the fishing nets and destroy the traditional boats of the Sri Lankan Tamils.

Bottom-trawling by Indian fishermen has contributed to the destruction of their primary source of livelihood by depleting the fisheries in Indian waters. They wish to replicate the same in Sri Lankan waters but under the protection of legal and historic rights. This is unlikely to secure the long-term future of these fishermen.

Bilateral Ties

It is important for India and Sri Lanka to maintain good relations for various reasons including for the sake of their citizens' livelihood.

In February 2015, the European Union (EU) imposed a ban on fish imports from Sri Lanka, for failing to sufficiently address illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. In April 2016, 15 months after the ban was imposed, the EU delisted Sri Lanka in light of the satisfactory reforms undertaken by the government to combat IUU.^{xxxvii} Sri Lanka's revenue against fish export from the EU was an estimated \$108 million prior to the ban.^{xxxviii} India, viewed as a "friendly neighbour" was not at the receiving end of a similar ban as Sri Lanka did not lodge a complaint to the EU against Indian fishermen poaching in Sri Lankan waters.^{xxxix}

Sri Lanka's attempts to maintain good relations has also meant that Indian fishermen have been remanded under the less stringent Immigrants and Emigrants Act, 1948 for crossing the maritime boundary rather than the more pertinent Fisheries Act, 1979 for poaching. In response to unrelenting domestic criticism for failing to curb illegal poaching, the Sri Lankan government has decided to amend the Fisheries (Regulation of Foreign Fishing Boats) Act, 1979. The amendment will lead to intensified patrol and surveillance by the Sri Lankan Navy and Coast Guard, imposition of higher penalties on foreign vessels found poaching in Lankan waters and the permanent seizure of captured trawlers. The government has restated its intent to continue releasing Indian fishermen on humanitarian grounds.^{xl} But a restive northern province with a mainly impoverished population is unlikely to maintain its patience for long. The island nation continues to rebuild after the conclusion of its decades long civil war. If the livelihood of its Tamil population is not secured and their fears continue to be neglected, instability may resume in the province—a risk Sri Lanka cannot afford to take.

International Obligations

The 1974 Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement is binding under the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, 1969 (VCLT).

The bilateral treaty with Sri Lanka does not have provisions for either withdrawal or termination. Under Article 56 of the VCLT, it stands then that India cannot unilaterally rescind the treaty. In order to withdraw from the treaty, India is required to notify Sri Lanka and acquire the latter's consent to the same under Article 65 (1). If Sri Lanka's consent is not forthcoming, the two countries will have to seek recourse under Article

33 of the UN Charter.^{xli} In such a situation a peaceful settlement may be sought through resorting to arbitration or involving a third party.^{xlii} However, Sri Lanka has opposed any disruption to the status quo with regards to the maritime boundary with India. Therefore, third-party intervention may threaten Indo-Sri Lankan relations and runs contrary to India's current "Neighbourhood First" policy. The abrogation of the bilateral treaty by India, as Tamil Nadu demands, will ensure the country loses face in the realm of international politics at a time when it is staking its claim as a rising power.

Conclusion

The reinstatement of the "traditional rights" of Tamil fishermen which Tamil Nadu continues to call for is short-sighted. It only serves as political rhetoric helping political parties curry favour amongst a one million strong vote base. As a responsible power, India has an obligation to abide by international law. The bilateral relation with Sri Lanka should take precedence over the small matter of an uninhabited island which fails to provide a feasible solution to the fishing dispute. Over the years, relations with Sri Lanka have been amicable at best. Colombo's growing closeness to China means New Delhi has to tread with caution. The need of the hour is to incentivize fishermen towards a sustainable alternative to bottom-trawling which will safeguard the future of both the Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen without compromising Indo-Sri Lankan ties. The willful and inadvertent transgressions into Sri Lankan waters by Indian fishermen need to be curtailed, but this will only be feasible when the livelihoods of these fishermen are secured—the duty and obligation of which rests with the Tamil Nadu and Central governments.

Source: www.maritimeindia.org, 07 February 2017

New research points to China being well on the way to ruling the waves

At present, evidence of malevolent intent is weak – but the balance of maritime power now needs to be monitored with care. Some truths glare at you. Some sneak up from behind, no matter how obvious they ought to be. So, it was that a research team from King's College London, supported by the *Financial Times*, declared last month that China now "rules the waves", becoming a world maritime superpower.

So much, so obvious. Of course, China ought to be a global maritime superpower. It has a 9,000-mile coastline, is the world's biggest marine fisherman, and as manufacturer to the world has become home to six of the world's 10 busiest ports. But the King's College research goes further, to suggest that China is pursuing a global quest to dominate the world's sea lanes, and to parlay its huge commercial maritime infrastructure into global military power. Without doubt, if you are in Donald Trump's anti-China war room, or among Vietnamese or Philippine fisherfolk in the South China Sea, or generally predisposed to believing that China is a nation with malevolent intent, the story must resonate powerfully.

But is China truly building its global maritime control by stealth? Or are the developments vividly described by the King's College team more the natural outcome of China's emergence as a major global trading economy? At this point – and at the risk of being accused of being a naive China apologist – I see more evidence of the former. But the extent of China's global maritime reach today is striking. It is premature to talk of China as a challenger to the US as policeman of the world's oceans, but if I were senior in the US Pacific Fleet, I would be watching developments with meticulous interest.

As China, has emerged from autarkic isolation in the 1970s to become one of the world's largest trading powers, so the emergence of China's ports, and China's merchant fleet should be no surprise. In 2000, China was home to five of the world's top 50 ports (if you include Hong Kong). Today it has six of the top 10. Chinese companies today own, or have invested in, 30 of the top 50 ports worldwide.

These 30 ports – which include Gwadar in Pakistan, Colombo in Sri Lanka, Djibouti in the Horn of Africa and Piraeus in Greece – last year handled two thirds of global container volumes, up from 41 per cent in 2010.

According to the King's College team, Hong Kong and mainland port operators have committed almost US\$46 billion in the past five years to deals in 40 ports worldwide. To me, this would seem a natural corollary of Xi Jinping's cherished "One Belt, One Road" initiative, with commitment to improving infrastructure linkage across the Asia-Pacific region. But defence or strategic power analysts are no doubt using a different prism. In tandem with port development, China's shipping lines have grown to deliver more containers worldwide today than those from any other country.

According to the shipping consultancy Drewry China's top five carriers together controlled almost one fifth of global container shipping. To me, this explosion is the natural and inevitable outcome of changing patterns in world trade. In 1970, most global maritime trade involved carrying raw materials from the poor developing world to processors, manufacturers and consumers in the affluent west. According to the UN, developing economies then accounted for 63 per cent of cargoes loaded, but just 18 per cent of cargoes unloaded.

Today, as developing economies, in particular China, become significant consumers in their own right, so cargoes unloaded have soared to 61 per cent of cargoes unloaded worldwide.

There is four times as much cargo carried between Asia and North America as is carried across the Atlantic – and four times as much cargo carried between Asia and Europe. China today accounts for 50 per cent of the world's steel production, and uses 46 per cent of world supply. It accounts for 68 per cent of world iron ore imports, 20 per cent of world coal imports, and 33 per cent of Asia's grain imports. No wonder China has become the world's leading maritime trading power.

China has similarly for many years dominated global fishing – both marine fishing, and inshore aquaculture. Out of a total world marine fish catch of 93.4 million tonnes a year, China accounts for nearly 15 million tonnes. Of 56 million people employed worldwide in fisheries, China accounts for around 14 million – nine million at sea and five million employed in fish farming inside China. Of a total world fishing fleet of 4.6 million vessels, China accounts for an estimated 700,000 – around twice the total of the world's second largest fishing fleet in Japan. But before anyone breaks into a sweat, we should remember that more than two thirds of these vessels are less than 10m long, and only one third have engines.

The King's College researchers begin to hyperventilate when they discover how many of the new China-built or invested ports now provide sanctuary to Chinese naval vessels, or have dual-use potential – in particular at Gwadar in Pakistan, and in Djibouti. As one Indian researcher noted: "There is an inherent duality in the facilities that China is establishing in foreign ports, which are ostensibly commercial but quickly upgradeable to carry out essential military missions."

Point taken, but how gravely concerned should we be? It is important to recall that the US navy, which accounts for 3.4 million deadweight tonnes of vessels, has more naval

hardware than the world's next nine navies combined. China, with about 770,000 dwt, is around one fifth the size. Defence analysts also express concern at the growth of China's coastguard. With over 200 vessels, China's coastguard fleet is almost three times the size of Japan's fleet. But along a 9,000-mile coastline, how exceptional is this? The United States, with a 12,380-mile coastline, has a coastguard fleet of 1,400 vessels.

Of course, China's coastguard is bumping around in an inherently more sensitive maritime region than the US's, teeming with globally important shipping lanes, and numerous contested areas around the South China Sea. The "revelations" of the King's College research at this point don't amount to anything that could realistically be described as a "clear and present danger".

But the pace of growth of China's maritime power is striking – both in the Pacific and beyond. At present, evidence of malevolent intent is weak, but the balance of maritime power now needs to be monitored with care.

Source: www.scmp.com, 05 February 2017

Economy, Defence and security policy: How UAE's crown prince's visit improved India's standing in the Gulf

Coverage of the Abu Dhabi Crown Prince, Shaikh Mohammad bin Zayed al Nahyan's visit to India, as the Chief Guest for Republic Day 2017, has been described as signaling ever-closer bilateral ties/a complete reset of India's relationship with the Gulf, and other equally strong affirmatives. Part of the reason is the invitation itself, which under this government has only been extended to countries that are a feature in India's strategic calculus. But another reason for these strong assertions come from an increased momentum observed in India's interactions with the Gulf and wider West Asia region under the incumbent government. Beginning in 2015 with Prime Minister Modi's maiden visit to the UAE, there have been two-way heads of state visits between India and the UAE, India and Qatar and an outgoing visit to Saudi Arabia. Further, the joint statements issued from these visits have been strikingly similar in the new grounds covered, incorporating as they have, maritime security and defense cooperation, statements against extremism and terrorism, pledges of infrastructure

investment and increasing trade figures, and plans to orient beyond the market logic of the energy relationship in order that it also be driven by strategic calculations.

Though the relationship between India and the Gulf is an old one — held up by multiple stakeholders, and with a monetary value attached to it, aspects that have been described as an "evolutionary happening", by Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar at last year's Raisina Dialogue, the effort to infuse a strategic element into this organic past and influence the design of future relations under the 'Think West' moniker, is new. Newer still, is the intent to match 'Think West' with India's other important strategic outreach to its East, 'Act East', also mentioned in the same speech.

Thinking West

India's core concerns when dealing with West Asia have traditionally centered around sustained energy access, diaspora-related issues and the safety of its citizens working there, the encroachment of absolutist ideologies foreign to the Indian subcontinent, the safe haven that terrorists who have attacked India have found in some countries of the region and related counter-terrorism concerns. These core concerns were first given formal expression in late Saudi King Abdullah's visit to Delhi in 2006 where the Delhi Declaration was issued and in former PM Manmohan Singh's visit to Riyadh and the Riyadh Declaration of 2010. These declarations were foundational documents which for the first time described the strategic potential of the India-Gulf relationship. They have since set the tone of our engagement with important Gulf countries including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, as seen in the latest round of joint statements signed since 2015.

That being said, the momentum to build on these new benchmarks is very different from what was seen post 2006. While some of it comes down to individual drive on part of leaders from both regions to elevate the relationship, changed security and economic contexts have also altered the Gulf calculus. Joint statements signed since 2015 attest to the fact that Gulf countries now look at us as an economic market beyond oil, a security partner in securing common waters, a future supplier of professional labor expertise and some countries in the Gulf regard us as a country committed to influencing international responses on countering state-backed terrorism.

At the same time, it is important to note that India too has changed. India can now be described by certain facts and figures that change the way a lot of countries look at us. India is now one of the world's fastest growing economies. The Indian navy has made clear its security intent for the Indo-Pacific Indian Ocean region - an area it sees as beginning in the Suez - and has taken ownership of a maritime region bearing its name. Further, India's growth ambitions depend on meeting sizeable infrastructure development goals and investment targets. It is a different India that the Gulf sees from just a decade ago, and coupled with the maximalist foreign policy drive of the current government, in a context of waning American influence in the region, the relationship is now a two-way street by design, not just lucky happenstance.

Economic and Security Linkages

A major portion of India's recent engagements with the region have focused on economic and security subjects and the intersection between the two. To that end, the economic recalibration happening in many countries of the region is a promising indicator for rooting stability in economic imperatives. And that belief is reflected in the joint statements, where we see cooperation between India and Gulf countries going far beyond oil into uncharted territory like renewables, IT cooperation, space and discussions on nuclear cooperation. For instance, on the conventional energy sector, the UAE's plan to partially-finance a Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) in Mangalore to mitigate Indian concerns of disruptions to oil supply have lent a strategic bend to the buyer-seller relationship. On non-conventional energy sources, the UAE's deep interest in renewable energy sources has matched the growing Indian interest here, and made this a strategic platform for Indian-UAE cooperation. Though this may rank as a competitive arena - on the opportunity side, there exists potential to increase solar-based technology cooperation between the two countries.

Similarly, while Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 plan is an ambitious vision for economic transformation, from where India sits, there are clear synergies that can be exploited between the two countries. For instance, upgrading labor flows to the region to meet their demand for more professional classes in the health and IT sector. Or partnering with Saudi capital in third party oil-rich countries to develop their downstream sector. On the new type of labor flows, our large presence in Saudi Arabia will facilitate a smoother entry culturally into the host country - and our presence in Africa will open doors for a joint venture that can reap economic dividends for that country too. Committing our labour and know-how are only starter projects, but we believe in Saudi Arabia's plans for diversification, and depending on how the Vision 2030 plans

develop - especially during its phase II years - the expectation would be that India's involvement and level of participation in the country's development, only increase.

Of particular relevance to influencing the trajectory of India-UAE relations was the UAE's response to Prime Minister Modi's call for investment in India during his maiden visit to the country in 2015. The UAE's decision to sign on to the government's plans for infrastructure development projects through a dedicated amount of US\$75 billion, ranks as the largest investment by any country into India so far and has been taken as a sign of the UAE's intent to be a partner in the future growth of India.

Counter Terrorism and Combating Extremism

Cooperation on combating terrorism has also been front and centre in India's outreach to the Gulf. Indian efforts to counter violent radical ideologies have largely weighed in on its counter-terrorism dimension. Home to the third-largest population of Muslims in the world, and also the seat of South Asia's leading school of Islam at Deoband, India is sensitive to the threat of radicalization. On this front, India has upgraded its intelligence cooperation with security agencies in Saudi Arabia and the UAE on two types of threats: state-back terrorists that find refuge in Gulf countries and second, on returning migrants who may have been radicalized. On the first type of threat, India has received support from Saudi Arabia over the last year. In March 2016, following the handing over of a second terror suspect to India a month earlier, Saudi Arabia, along with the US, clamped down on Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) financiers by imposing sanctions on four individuals and two organizations with ties across Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia.

In the joint statements of 2015 and 2016 signed with the Saudis and the Emiratis, both countries pledged their support to backing India's convention against state-back terrorism (CCIT) at the UN — and they are increasingly seen as front-line partners in combating terrorism. The UAE's strong statement of support after an attack on Indian soldiers in Kashmir this September, which led to India's retaliatory raid over the Line of Control (LoC) and the subsequent downturn in relations with Pakistan, was warmly received in India, and in a sense, has further vouched for its credibility as a partner for India in countering state-sponsored terrorism.

In the most recent contribution to furthering the bilateral dialogue on countering violent extremism, the Emirati delegation for India's Republic Day included a 'Tolerance Delegation', comprising of experts in the field of countering violent extremism - expanding the bilateral counter terrorism project beyond its legal framework and intelligence dimensions.

Security and Defence Cooperation

Progress has also been made over the last year in the realm of security and defense cooperation, the UAE and Saudi Arabia have both signaled interest in Prime Minister Modi's Make in India and indigenous defense manufacturing flagship programs. There has been talk of Indian assistance in developing the UAE's air defense systems and repairing defense equipment. The strategic setting to security cooperation in the Gulf is admittedly more complicated, and raises questions of capabilities, India's different approach to security alliances and a fractious regional political setting that still needs to be rigorously examined for potential opportunities.

However, an area of budding cooperation is between the navies of the Gulf and India. India's maritime strategy in this region is largely understood to be driven by the need to secure passage of energy and trade shipments through Arabian Sea/Indian Ocean waters to India, and toward this end, the Indian navy has provided training and support to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) navies, worked on building operational synergy, and also partnered with them in anti-piracy operations. The other driving consideration for India's Arabian maritime strategy is its aim to secure its strategic stakes in the Indian Ocean region, and its partnership with Gulf navies over here is overtly strategic, benefiting from their natural geographic placement along the western rim of the Indian Ocean. Additionally, the UAE's own naval power projections in its near-abroad, seen last year in the establishment of their first military base outside the Gulf, in Eritrea, and the fact that many Gulf navies are members in the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, are indicators that bode well for deepening the strategic partnership in this arena.

Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Mohammad bin Zayed's visit to India as Chief Guest for Republic Day celebrations has happened against the backdrop of a whole year's worth of closer engagements between the two countries — and this, to some extent, provides a working template for closer relations between other Gulf countries and India.

Source: www.firstpost.com, 06 February 2017

Does the Trump White House know that Asia is opting for diplomacy on South China Sea?

Australians noticed when US President Donald Trump's then nominee for secretary of state, Rex Tillerson, told the Senate on January 11 that China should not be allowed access to its artificial islands in the South China Sea. If this amounted to a blockade, he would probably seek Australian participation. He said: "We've got to show back up in the region with our traditional allies in Southeast Asia."

Australians also could not have missed the brutal message emerging from Trump's phone conversation with their prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull: a volatile White House is poised to ride roughshod over old alliances, putting their contributions under intense scrutiny with an eye to what Washington gets in return. But the nations of Southeast Asia that claim territory in the South China Sea have settled on diplomacy. None is seeking a US show of force or asking for US intervention. It's uncertain for whom America would be mounting blockades.

The Philippines is the most dramatic example of one-on-one diplomacy with China, producing a kind of détente. In November, following President Rodrigo Duterte's visit to Beijing, there was a quiet withdrawal of the Chinese troop ships and dredging barges that had reportedly arrived in Scarborough Shoal a few months earlier. Three hundred Filipino fishermen were reported to have returned to the shoal. The biggest sign that Manila has downgraded the dispute was the low-key way it registered its protest at China's installation of anti-aircraft and anti-missile systems on artificial islands in the Spratlys. The "note verbale" without fanfare or press releases was a shift from the megaphone diplomacy in place since 2010.

And it is not just the Philippines. The general secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party, Nguyen Phu Trong, visited Beijing last month and the two sides issued a joint communiqué pledging to "manage well their maritime difference". This followed a port call by Chinese warships at Cam Ranh Bay in October on Vietnam's invitation. In short, Vietnam has not stepped forward to assume the leadership that the Philippines once showed in agitating against China. His cordiality between China and Vietnam is likely to be confirmed when President Xi Jinping (习近平) visits Vietnam later this year. Some diplomatic sources believe Vietnam has interest in joint management of disputed maritime territory that might focus on environmental questions and fisheries

management. That appears to be what the Philippines and China are doing. Two Philippine coast guard vessels arrived at Scarborough Shoal on November 5 to start regular patrols, with four more ships planned for deployment. There have been no reports of clashes with the Chinese. Indeed, both sides cooperated in search-and-rescue efforts for missing Filipino fishermen.

If Vietnam is not stepping in to take the place of the Philippines, neither is Malaysia. The visit to Beijing by Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak in November saw the signing of a memorandum of understanding on naval cooperation – the first major attempt at a defence pact between the two countries. An Australian news headline last year suggested joint patrols of the South China Sea by Indonesia and Australia. But there is no sign Jakarta wants to depart from non-alignment, let alone inherit from Manila the leadership of an anti-Chinese position within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. So how would Secretary Tillerson justify a blockade? No US allies or partners – Japan, Singapore or India – have shown the slightest interest in joining in. It would arguably be a breach of international law and very likely to be viewed by China as an act of war.

As for China, there are competing strands at work in its foreign policy. Its behaviour oscillates between rising-power forcefulness and cautious diplomacy. But with all of Southeast Asia engaging with it, Beijing would lose a lot by returning to assertiveness. In a sense, it is locked into restraint by its recent diplomacy.

Meanwhile, Australia should keep its options open and counsel restraint on all sides. It might even let the Trump administration know that, while they have been settling into new offices, in the South China Sea diplomacy seems to have become the order of the day.

Source: www.scmp.com, 06 February 2017

US and China row over South China Sea ‘could spark World War Three and a conflict of unparalleled violence’, expert claims

A WAR between nuclear armed China and US would spell doom for the world even if conventional weapons were exclusively used, experts are warning. Tension between the Pacific powers has been at boiling point following the election of Donald Trump

who has repeatedly vowed to take China on. But experts are warning a military clash between China and the US would rapidly turn into World War 3 and inflict carnage on the planet. China is furious following the recent US deployment of the Thaad missile defence system to South Korea because it could be used against them as well as against Kim Jong-un. Beijing military chiefs have responded by announcing last month it would be deploying intercontinental nuclear missiles to a spot where they could be launched against the US.

Meanwhile Donald Trump has made it clear he will not tolerate a Chinese takeover of the South China Sea islands. And since his inauguration, the President has suggested he's not afraid of a military contest to protect Taiwan which China argues is a renegade state belonging to them. Washington's new hard-line stance on Chinese aggression was again made clear on Saturday when US Defence Secretary James Mattis said the US was ready to protect islands owned by Japan but which China claims. Secretary of Defence James N. Mattis, on a two-day visit to Japan, addresses reporters at the defence ministry in Tokyo on Saturday But Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang has called on Trump's administration to mind its own business.

He said: "We urge the U.S. side to take a responsible attitude, stop making wrong remarks on the issue involving the Diaoyu islands' sovereignty, and avoid making the issue more complicated and bringing instability to the regional situation." And the ruling Communist Party mouthpiece, The People's Daily today, warned: "Were the United States and China to wage war on one another, the whole world would divide itself." July a Chinese H-6K bomber was photographed patrolling the islands and reefs in the South China Sea Chinese dredgers have been creating artificial islands, such as this one in Mischief Reef, which are in effect airbases

Experts speaking to the Independent agreed that any conflict could spiral out of control with terrifying consequences. Trevor McCrisken, associate professor of politics and international studies at the University of Warwick, said that if war began "we would be looking, I would imagine, at World War Three".

He said:" From a global strategic risk level I would say the last thing you want is war between the United States and any of the major powers because of the risks of escalation, obviously, the potential for nuclear weapons to be used." But even if both sides stepped back from using nukes the results would be terrifying. Kerry Brown, professor of Chinese studies at King's College London and director of the Lau China Institute there, said war would cause an economic calamity.

He said: "It would, of course, totally upend supply routes, however, and probably cause a global recession. "So, it would, no matter who won in terms of military outcomes, be lose-lose and cut against the logic of self interest of both the US and China."

Source: www.thesun.co.uk, 06 February 2017

Indian Ocean emerges as key arena of Geopolitics: Asif

KARACHI - Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif has said that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is rightfully considered as a game changer not only for Pakistan but for the economic development and prosperity of the entire region. Addressing the closing ceremony of 7th International Maritime Conference, organised by National Centre for Maritime Policy Research (NCMPR) here on Monday, Asif said that the Indian Ocean had emerged as a key battleground of geopolitics as strategic interests of the world were in conflict there. "The overwhelming reliance on sea routes and increasing volume of sea trade has enhanced the importance of Indian Ocean for the world," he opined.

The International Maritime Conference, held as in tandem with Multinational Exercise AMAN 17, concluded after three days of deliberations on maritime security, economy and marine environment. A large number of public and private sector participants from Pakistan and around the world created an ideal opportunity for the exchange of ideas. The defence minister did not forget to bring in CPEC in his address, and said that maritime activities would increase in the north Arabian Sea and beyond once the CPEC developed and Gwadar Port became operational.

Consequently, he said, the responsibilities of Pakistan Navy would also increase for maintaining a secure maritime environment for the smooth flow of sea trade. He acknowledged the maritime security initiatives taken by Pakistan Navy for ensuring peace and order at sea individually and in collaboration with the partner navies.

He also appreciated convening of the conference, and termed it a step in the same direction. "Indeed, it is praiseworthy," he commented. The minister assured that the

recommendations put forward at the conference would be given due consideration by the government.

Earlier, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Zakaullah, in his closing remarks, said that the development of economic corridors and linking to maritime routes had provided an impetus to economic integration of the regional countries and beyond. He further said that CPEC was one such development in the region, and once it became fully developed, the scope and potential of blue economy would increase further.

The admiral also said that maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region had gained particular significance in the recent past due to increased dependence of the world on sea trade and quest for energy resources. “Any disruption in the free flow of trade would not only impact the regional states but would also have implications for the overall global economy,” he apprehended.

In the end, the defence minister distributed prizes among the students of Bahria University and NCMPR, who had won the article and poster competitions held on the sidelines of the conference. A large number of foreign delegates, PN officials, civil and military dignitaries attended the event.

Source: nation.com.pk, 14 February 2017