



MAKING WAVES

Inside this Brief

- **Maritime Security.....p.6**
- **Maritime Forces.....p.13**
- **Shipping, Ports and Ocean Economy.....p.21**
- **Marine Environment.....p.35**
- **Geopolitics.....p.46**

Editorial Team

*Captain (Dr.) Gurpreet S
Khurana
Commander Dinesh Yadav*

Ms. Richa Klair

Address

*National Maritime Foundation
Varuna Complex, NH- 8
Airport Road
New Delhi-110 010, India*

Email: maritimeindia@gmail.com

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MARITIME SECURITY



US Naval Chief lauds PN role for Maritime Security

MSAF: Fiji Ports responsible for removing derelict vessels

SL Navy records significant income from Maritime Security operations

Maritime Security Governance prospects in the Bay of Bengal

Illegal Unreported and Unregulated(IUU) Fishing in Palk Bay: Issues and Challenges

Indian fishermen chased away, fishing nets snapped by Sri Lankan Navy

India sanctions 42 additional Coastal Radars for Security



India to test home Grown Underwater Missile from Russian EKM Class Submarine

Indian Navy gives back Seychelles' Coast Guard Ship

Dassault to offer Rafale fighter to Indian Navy

'MiG-35, a perfect solution for Indian Armed Forces'

Tarini to be Inducted into Indian Navy On 18 February 17

Deck-Based Ka-226 Sparked Indian Navy's Interest

Iran launches major Naval exercise in northern Indian Ocean

Disruption of trade in India-Pacific region to have adverse effect on Global Economy: India Navy chief

Vessel oversupply to continue in Chemical Shipping

Hanjin Shipping's collapse amid woes in shipping and shipbuilding industries

Japan, EU agree to push bilateral trade deal

India's Chabahar port plan runs into Iran loan application hurdle

S. Korean Government to Assist in Recapitalization of Hyundai Merchant Marine

Haropa Ports sees double digit Maritime trade with India



MARINE ENVIRONMENT



Toxic Chemicals Affect Marine Life in Deep Sea Trenches

Tonnes of Marine trash collected from Northland

Chennai Port trust to procure response vessel after Kamarajar port oil spill

Industry associations hit out as EU persists with plan to include Shipping in Emissions Trading System

Fishers concerns about catch at Holloways Beach with skin lesions

Arctic Sea Ice Expansion, Blame It to Air Pollution caused by human

Microplastics In the Marine Environment must stop, UN launches campaign

Something Fishy: Organisms from Suez Canal Put Mediterranean Marine life at risk



GEOPOLITICS



Despite Trump's threats to Iran, India must push ahead on Chabahar

US Geopolitical game in South China Sea 'not only aimed at pressuring Beijing'

India's concerns over China-Pakistan Corridor 'unwarranted': Chinese media

Worried over Trump, China Tries to Catch up With U.S. Navy

China envoy says sea dispute should not hold hostage Manila-Beijing ties

US-China relations: Trump meets senior official Yang Jiechi



US Naval Chief lauds PN role for Maritime Security

ISLAMABAD - Commander US Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) Vice Admiral Kevin M Donegan on Wednesday lauded the professionalism of Pakistan Navy personnel and active role being played by Pakistan Navy for maritime security and stability in the region. Admiral Donegan stated this during a meeting with Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral M Zakaullah here in his office.

The US admiral said that the near permanent presence of Pakistan Navy units in the Area of Responsibility (AOR) has greatly helped in shaping a secure environment for freedom of navigation in the region. Matters of mutual interest including bilateral naval collaboration and security environment in Indian Ocean Region came under discussion during the meeting. Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral M Zakaullah thanked the visiting dignitary for participation by US Navy in Exercise AMAN-17.

Commander US NAVCENT highly appreciated the conduct of Multinational Naval Exercise AMAN-17 in Karachi in which 37 nations participated with ships, aircraft, helicopters, special operations forces, explosive ordnance teams/Marine teams and Observers.

Source: nation.com.pk, 16 February 2017

MSAF: Fiji Ports responsible for removing derelict vessels

THE Maritime Safety Authority of Fiji (MSAF) is only responsible in ensuring that all harmful substances from derelict ships are removed. MSAF chief executive officer, John Tunidau highlighted this during his presentation to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts today. However, Mr Tunidau said Fiji Ports is responsible for removing all derelict vessels from the Harbour. Mr Tunidau said officers from the authority are also assigned to check the vessel in order to ensure the safety and prevention of pollution. He also stated that MSAF continues to work in ensuring to raise the profile of maritime safety and marine environmental protection obligations.

Source: www.fjtimes.com, 16 February 2017

SL Navy records significant income from Maritime Security operations

The Sri Lanka Navy has earned an income of 20 million US dollars within the course of the last fifteen months through the maritime security operations. Navy Media Spokesperson Lieutenant Commander Chaminda Walakuluge said the revenue was earned from November 13, 2015 to date. The president handed over the maritime security operations conducted by Avant Garde Security Services to the Navy in 2015. The Sri Lanka Navy has been conducting maritime security operations since then

Source: newsfirst.lk, 16 February 2017

Maritime Security governance prospects in the Bay of Bengal

-Rajni Gamage, RSIS

BIMSTEC, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation comprising Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, celebrates its 20th anniversary in June 2017. It is well positioned to engage in maritime security cooperation to face the challenges of a changing strategic and economic landscape.

Although BIMSTEC was initially established to tackle sub-regional economic and social development issues, its potential for sub-regional security cooperation has come to the fore in the past decade. While BIMSTEC started with six economic-related priority areas in 1998, security issues have been included since the 8th Ministerial Meeting in 2005, including counter-terrorism, transnational crime and disaster management.

In October 2016, India hosted a joint BRICS–BIMSTEC Outreach Summit for the first time, effectively increasing BIMSTEC's profile as a sub-regional economic and security organisation. A number of factors have facilitated this increased profile and potential of BIMSTEC.

First, the Bay of Bengal is increasing in economic and strategic significance. The sub-region is marked as a cockpit for economic growth, driven by the growing economies of India and Myanmar. It also lays claim to critical sea lines of communication for the transit of trade and energy supplies from the Middle East, Europe and Africa to the economic powerhouses of East Asia.

Second, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has been moribund as a regional organisation. India has for some time been looking to engage more deeply with sub-regional initiatives that exclude Pakistan, its deadlock with the latter being a major impediment to the progress of SAARC. While a number of sub-regional groupings have emerged, such as SASEC (South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation), BIMSTEC stands out in being more comprehensive in its membership and comprising a good mix of coastal South Asian and Southeast Asian states.

Third, the intensification of the India–China great power rivalry in the Indian Ocean region provides greater impetus for India to engage more deeply with the bay states so as to not lose out to China. Recent issues of contention between China and India include border stand-offs and the strategic inroads made by China into India's neighbouring states through defence ties and port development. Foremost among these is the operationalisation of Pakistan's Gwadar port (financed by interest-free Chinese loans) in November 2016, as part of the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor and the associated maritime security cooperation between the Chinese and Pakistani navies.

The importance of maritime security governance is increasingly recognised by coastal and island states in the Bay of Bengal, which deal with similar threats, both traditional and non-traditional in nature. There is every likelihood of BIMSTEC becoming an instrument for sub-regional maritime security governance. Recent economic and political developments within the member states augur well for the prospects of maritime security cooperation. These include India's maritime-related domestic and foreign initiatives since 2014 and Myanmar's 'strategic realignment' following internal political reforms since 2011.

Sri Lanka's strategic 'rebalance' since 2015 — evident in its increased participation in regional maritime-related initiatives — and Bangladesh's strong advocacy of the 'blue economy' in the recent past, alongside efforts towards naval modernisation within most of the Bay states, have also helped. Meanwhile, Thailand and India have held bilateral discussions on maritime security, trade and connectivity in June 2016.

Thailand also signed a memorandum of understanding with Myanmar on the joint development of marine tourism in January this year. There are a number of serious maritime security issues in the Bay of Bengal which require timely and coordinated responses. These include the 2015 Rohingya refugee crisis which saw thousands of 'boat people' being stranded on the Andaman Sea, and made vulnerable to recruitment by criminal networks, sea pirates and Islamist militants. The Bay is also prone to some of the most severe natural disasters, incidents of sea piracy as well as illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

At present, maritime security cooperation initiatives within the sub-region do not include all the coastal Bay states and do include states from outside the sub-region. But it is the Bay states that have the largest stakes in their surrounding waters, and a sub-regional maritime security governance mechanism within BIMSTEC is essential.

Maritime security cooperation also provides BIMSTEC members with an avenue for making inroads into Southeast Asia (or other sections of the Indian Ocean region for Thailand and Myanmar). Recent statements made by leaders and officials from India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka all reflect the awareness that there is a need to break out of the confines of South Asia and engage more deeply with the more prosperous countries to the East.

BIMSTEC's key challenges in the past have been the lukewarm attitude of India and the internal preoccupations and limited capabilities of member states towards regional instruments. With a changing strategic and economic landscape, coupled with increasing maritime security threats, BIMSTEC may be well placed to become involved with broader security cooperation among its member states.

Source: www.eastasiaforum.org, 17 February 2017

Illegal Unreported and Unregulated(IUU) Fishing in Palk Bay: Issues and Challenges

-R.S. Vasani

The Context

Palk Bay is the South-western portion of the strait which is a small stretch of ocean in the Bay of Bengal located between Northern Sri Lanka and south eastern India. The

strait is bounded on the south by Pamban Island, Adam's bridge (also known as Rama Setu), the Gulf of Mannar. The strait is 40 to 85 miles (64 to 137 km) wide, 85 miles long. The average depth is less than 100 meters. Many rivers including Vaigai (India) drain into the Palk Bay. The Sri Lankan side has many islets including Katchatheevu which has been the bone of contention between Indian fishers and Sri Lankan fishers since 1974.

The occurrences of Tamil fishermen crossing the International Maritime Boundary Limit (IMBL) in large numbers—quoting the traditional rights to fish in the Palk Bay and despite the fear of being arrested—has not abated. The mostly intentional crossing of the officially demarcated (IMBL) by quoting historical rights has not helped matters. The agreement of 1974 for demarcating the IMBL, and the subsequent clarifications by the Indian Government, do not allow Indian fishers to cross the IMBL. The fishers continue to fish not only around the Katchatheevu Island (where the drying of nets was allowed in the 1974 agreement) but also in areas well in Sri Lankan waters. With the clarifications of 1976 on the floor of the Indian Parliament by the then External Affairs Minister Swaran Singh, the fishermen were specifically directed not to cross the IMBL to fish in Sri Lankan waters. The vows of Tamil fishermen have only accentuated with each passing year due to the complexities involved in resolving the vexed issue of fishing in the Palk Bay. Both Sri Lanka and India are engaged in tackling the issue in an amicable manner; however, a permanent solution seems to be elusive given the ground realities between the fishermen on both sides who insist on juxtaposing historical rights. This issue brief makes an attempt to understand the present status, and provide some options for finding lasting solutions.

Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing

Fishermen the world over are involved in poaching wherever surveillance and anti-poaching measures are weak. Fishers from neighbouring countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and others from South East Asian countries are also regular poachers in unmonitored fishing areas, irrespective of who owns that Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The overlapping claims of the EEZ in the South China Sea between China and its maritime neighbours (Taiwan, Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam) has resulted in aggressive fishing by Chinese fishers who are even escorted by the Chinese Coast Guard. With dwindling stocks and increasing demand, the resulting conflicts have become a regular occurrence. The situation in Europe and west appears to be better managed, with clear demarcations and the monitoring of

activities in the fishing zones. However, what needs to be noted is that, irrespective of which country's EEZ is violated, the activities such as the ones witnessed in the Palk Bay would come under the category of IUU, i and needs to be dealt with as such by the concerned Governments. From this point of view, the navies and the coast guards of the countries charged with the protection of the EEZ and the prevention of poaching by foreign vessels are well within their rights to apprehend the offenders, and try them according to the law of the land.

In the Indian context, due to the seriousness of the problem between Gujarati fishers and Pakistan fishers, a hot line was set up between the MSA and the Indian Coast Guard. This has certainly helped in resolving such issues as crossing into each other's territory and consequent apprehension. Signed in 2005, this MOU has been extended for another five years—from March 2016 ii onwards. This CBM has, to a large extent, addressed the issue of the unwarranted detention and harassment of fishermen who are pursuing their livelihood. However, the problems are most acute in the respect of TN fishers who have a Hobson's choice in Palk Bay. It has also been reported that a similar MOU on the lines of the existing one with MSA of Pakistan is being considered for implementation with the Coast Guards of India and Sri Lanka.

Tackling the Problem in Palk Bay: Alternatives

It was decided by both the Governments last year (2016) that the Joint Working Group formed would meet every three months, iv and the ministerial meeting would be conducted every six months. The JWG met in New Delhi in November 2016, and the first ministerial meeting was conducted in Colombo on 02 January 2017. The main issue for the Indian side was the return of the fishing vessels apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy/Coast Guard. By and large, the release of the fishermen has not posed major hurdles on both sides, despite some occasional delays. However, it is the release of the mechanized vessels that has strained the relations between the fishers of both countries.

As far as the Sri Lankan fishers are concerned, they object to the use of mechanized trawlers, which has created havoc on the Indian side of the IMBL. The insistence of the Indian Tamil fishers that they need to be given some more time (three to five years)—has not been received well by their counterparts who fear that the fishing grounds on the Sri Lankan side will also meet similar fate as on the Indian side. It is noteworthy that Sri Lankan fishers whom are also Tamils from the Island—have not

objected to traditional modes of fishing which is least disruptive to the fishing grounds.

The Sri Lankan Navy or the Coast Guard cannot be blamed for arresting the fishermen who are violating the IMBL on a regular basis. It may be noted that many fishermen are also wage earners, and the fear of loss of livelihood compels them to fish in Sri Lankan waters as there is hardly any fish left on the Indian side due to overfishing using mechanized means. Arrests by the Sri Lankan Navy or the Sri Lankan Coast Guard, and the follow-up action by the State Government to exert pressure on the centre to secure the release of fishermen is a regular occurrence, and both sides eventually release them. Sri Lanka has serious reservations about releasing the boats which they know will return to Sri Lankan waters to indulge in illegal fishing again. Successive governments in Tamil Nadu have used the fishers as vote banks and support them even when their actions are not in accordance with the agreements. This is also partially due to the political affiliation of some of the boat owners who have invested in trawlers, and have employed fishers to poach in the neighbouring country's waters. The fishers who man these trawlers are wage earners under threat, and hence do not mind taking the risk of venturing deep in to Sri Lankan waters.

Joint Patrolling

Presently, the Indian Navy, Coast Guard and the Sri Lankan Coast Guard have quarterly meeting near the IMBL where issues of security, fisheries, and other related issues are discussed. The maritime security agencies on both sides have good working relations, and exchange all information during such meetings in a spirit of cooperation.

The proposal for Joint Patrol by the two sides in Palk Bay is not new. It has been proposed on many occasions by the Sri Lankan Government at regular intervals. It may be noted that this was rejected outright by the TN Government when the DMK was in power in 2007. However, it appears that India is now looking at this option seriously, as agreed during a meeting in November 2016 between the External Affairs Ministers of both the countries. However, there are serious challenges associated with enforcing a strict code of conduct for politically supported fishers. Since the number of offenders from the Indian side is huge, it would become the primary task of the Indian Navy/Coast Guard to prevent Tamil fishers from crossing the IMBL.

Going by past precedents, the regional party in power would accuse the centre of interfering with the pursuit of livelihood of fisher's by deploying the Indian Coast Guard alongside its counterparts from Sri Lanka. The possibility of fishers taking to the streets, and precipitating a crisis for the party in power in Tamil Nadu, is immense. This has the potential for creating a law and order problem, and could spiral out of control due to strong emotions that unite the fishers and the politicians in Tamil Nadu.

Impasse

Even in the recently concluded ministerial meeting, the insistence on obtaining more time for stopping Indian trawlers vii for fishing has not been received favourably by the Sri Lankan side as there are genuine fears about the wanton destruction to the fishing fields on the Sri Lankan side. It is on record that, during the meeting between the fishermen's association on both sides facilitated by the Centre, Tamil fishers wanted a period of five years. Thereafter, it was brought down to three years—and even that is not acceptable to the Sri Lankan fishers considering the delicate nature of the fishing grounds on the Sri Lankan side.

The problem is the making of the State that has a responsibility for providing alternate means of livelihood to the fishermen. Various suggested options for alleviating the sufferings of the fishers have not been acted up on. Despite the strong advice for moving away from trawlers to deep sea water fishing, not much has been done in that direction for decades. The Tamil Nadu vision document of 2023 which was brought out in 2013, does make a mention about the concept of deep sea fishing, but it is moving at a snail's speed. The procurement of the mother vessels viii and other related activities remains as work in progress. The wherewithal for deep sea fishing is just not in place. For deep sea fishing to be effective, it needs an adequate number of suitably equipped vessels, trained man power, hinterland connectivity, cold storage, on board canning facilities, etc.,

Many nations indulge in deep sea fishing on a routine basis, and it is indeed surprising that, despite the advantages of two million plus square kilometres of EEZ, India has not invested in this initiative. The fact that the livelihood options of Tamil fishermen cannot be at the mercy of a small neighbouring nation needs to be borne in mind, and all actions required— including skill development and infrastructure— need to be initiated without any time delay by committing funds and working to a

time bound plan to wean the fishermen away from trawlers, and eventually from Palk Bay.

Conclusion

It is evident that any solution to the problems of fishers in the Palk Bay has remained elusive mostly due to the insistence of the TN fishers (who are supported by political parties) to violate the IMBL on a regular basis. As a big neighbour, India has a responsibility to ensure that it abides by the provisions of FAO guidelines on preventing IUU.

Knowing that the fishers affected on their side are also Tamils, Sri Lanka has been sympathetic, and is willing to allow traditional modes of fishing for some more time. The insistence by the TN fishers that they should be allowed to continue with mechanized trawlers defies all logic and reasoning. Unfortunately, they are also supported by political parties with an eye on the vote bank. This does not augur well for bilateral relations. That the Joint Working Groups are meeting every quarter, and the Ministerial meeting is now a six-monthly occurrence, should pave the way for keeping up the dialogue to work on the way ahead.

Both the Centre and the State should fast track the processes for acquiring deep sea fishing capability with the associated augmentation of infrastructure, maintenance facility, hinterland connectivity, skills development, and other such components to make DSF a success which is like the many East Asian and South East Asian countries who have invested in this mode of fishing.

Source: www.maritimeindia.org, 20 February 2017

Indian fishermen chased away, fishing nets snapped by Sri Lankan Navy

Sri Lankan Naval personnel allegedly chased away nearly 3,000 fishermen from Tamil Nadu off Katchatheevu islet and snapped fishing nets of 40 mechanised boats. The Lankan Naval personnel cut the nets and chased away the fishermen on charges of entering their territorial waters yesterday, Rameswaram Fisheries department Assistant Director, Kulanchinathan said. The fishermen, who had ventured into the sea from this island town in more than 600 boats, were intercepted by the naval men, he added. The fishermen returned to the shore this morning, the official said.

Meanwhile, a Sri Lankan Court today extended till March 7, the remand of 10 Tamil Nadu fishermen who were arrested on February 7 by the Lankan Navy for allegedly fishing in their waters, Rameswaram Fishermen's Association President P Sesuraja said. As many as 33 fishermen and 129 boats are in the island nation's custody, he added.

Source: www.newindianexpress.com, 21 February 2017

India sanctions 42 additional coastal radars for security

India on Tuesday decided to augment its coastal surveillance capabilities as it sanctioned the second phase of 42 coastal radar chain — including 4 mobile ones — to supplement the existing 46, installed after the November 2008 terror attacks on Mumbai. The 38 additional radar stations and four mobile radar stations were sanctioned by the Defence Acquisition Council at its meeting on Tuesday afternoon. It will cost Rs 800 crore, with public sector giant Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) undertaking the task.

The DAC headed by Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar approved that the radar chain will integrate the vessel (ship) management system for Gulf of Kutch and Gulf Khambat — both of which are in Gujarat, close to Karachi, Pakistan, from where the Mumbai attackers took the sea route to Mumbai. This is continuation of the coastal surveillance systems on for gap-less electronic surveillance, an official of the Ministry of Defence said here.

The DAC also sanctioned an 'intermediate' engine repair facility for MiG 29k fighter jets of the Indian Navy. The facility will be at the Indian Navy base at Goa. The Navy has 45 such jets that operate from the deck of the sea-borne aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya.

Source: www.tribuneindia.com, 21 February 2017



India to test home Grown Underwater Missile from Russian EKM Class Submarine

India has decided to test home grown heavyweight torpedo Varunastra from Russian EKM class submarines. The anti-submarine torpedo also known as underwater missile called Varunastra will be going into production phase, said Defense Research Development Organization.

Indian Navy had ordered 73 of the 1,500-kg wire-guided torpedoes for \$132 million, which will be manufactured by Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) in Hyderabad. 7.6-meter-long Varunastra contains 95% indigenous content which can travel at speeds of around 38 KT. Indian Navy claimed that Varunastra has a strike range of 20 Kilometer. Sources said that India has already offered Varunastra to Vietnam.

Varunastra, a versatile naval weapon which can be fired from the Rajput class destroyers, Delhi class and all future Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) ships capable of firing heavy weight torpedoes and is capable of targeting quiet and stealthy submarines both in deep and littoral waters even in intense countermeasure atmosphere. DRDO also claimed that anti-submarine torpedo has GPS based locating aid.

Source: sputniknews.com, 16 February 2017

Indian Navy gives back Seychelles' Coast Guard ship

Seychelles Coast Guard Patrol Ship (SCGPS) Topaz has completed her Medium Refit and has been handed over to Colonel Simone a Dine, Commander Seychelles Coast Guard by Rear Admiral Narayan Prasad, Admiral Superintendent, Naval Dockyard, Visakhapatnam, at the Naval Jetty in INS Circars here on Thursday. The ship underwent a Medium Refit at Naval Dockyard from March 2016 to January 2017.

The event commenced with the introduction of the Officers and Crew of SCGPS Topaz to Colonel Simone a Dine Commander Seychelles Coast Guard and Rear Admiral Narayan Prasad. Commodore IB Uthaiyah, General Manager (Refit) gave a

brief account on the progress of refit which was followed by an address by Lieutenant Lyndon Lablache Commanding Officer SCGPS Topaz. The event concluded with customary exchange of crests between the dignitaries and a walk around of the ship. This event marked the culmination of the refit of SCGPS Topaz undertaken by the Indian Navy as a diplomatic courtesy to strengthen relations between India and the island nation of Seychelles in the Indian Ocean.

Various upgrades in machinery, equipment and habitability were undertaken as part of the refit. The ship is now fitted with latest navigation, communication and weaponry to enhance performance of the ship in the years to come. The refit spanned over 11 months with Naval Dockyard, Visakhapatnam upgrading the equipment of the ship in every aspect to make it a potent force in the arsenal of Seychelles Coast Guard.

SCGPS Topaz, former INS Tarmugli was gifted to the Govt. of Seychelles by India in 2005 to strengthen the strategic partnership between the two nations and work together to ensure the safety of the Indian Ocean Region. The ship, used as a patrol vessel by Seychelles Coast Guard is a Fast Attack Craft which served the Indian Navy from 2001 to 2005 before being handed over to Seychelles.

Source: telanganatoday.news, 16 February 2017

Dassault to offer Rafale fighter to Indian Navy

Dassault Aviation of France plans to bid on a contract to supply 57 fighter jets to the Indian Navy, the Press Trust of India reported. Eric Trappier, chief executive officer of Dassault Aviation, was quoted as telling the agency of the company's planned bid while attending the Aero India 2017 air show. "We are the only company to have strictly the same aircraft for our air force and for our navy. Our Rafale for the navy and the air force are same," he said. Dassault Aviation recently won a \$9.28 billion contract to supply Rafale fighters to the Indian air force.

The Indian navy last month had issued a Request for Information from aircraft manufacturers after deciding to kill an earlier plan to purchase a naval version of the indigenous Tejas fighter. "In case we have the new contract for the navy, we will benefit from the local implementation of the Rafale production [for the air force],"

Trappier said. Dassault has already begun manufacturing the initial lot of 36 Rafale jets for the Indian air force.

Source: www.upi.com, 16 February 2017

‘MiG-35, a perfect solution for Indian Armed Forces’

-Nayanima Basu

JSC Russian Aircraft Corporation MiG is keen to offer its brand-new fighter MiG-35 under the ‘Make in India’ scheme, according to the company’s Director General Ilya Tarasenko. In an interview with *BusinessLine* on the sidelines of Aero India, he said MiG is ready to meet all the requirements of the Indian armed forces. Excerpts:

The Navy recently offered to buy 57 carrier-based fighter jets. Are you interested in that deal?

We completed deliveries of more than 40 carrier-based MiG-29K/KUB for INS Vikramaditya in 2016. We will offer MiG-29K/KUB for the Navy for all future carriers. We are prepared to meet any requirement of the Indian Navy with the aircraft.

Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar has said India may require 300-400 fighters in the coming years. Do you see this as an opportunity for the new generation MiG?

We are prepared to offer our new MiG-35 fighters. This aircraft is most loved by the Indian Air Force. We are planning to begin negotiations on its supply soon with the Ministry of Defence. We are keen to offer it under the ‘Make in India’ programme with special focus on localisation. We have already gained the confidence of the Indian Air Force with the MiG-29 upgrade programme.

Tell us more about your offer of MiG-35 fighters to India, considering you are facing tough competition from SAAB, Lockheed Martin and Boeing.

MiG-35 is a brand new multirole fighter — the perfect solution for the Indian Air Force that is seeking to replace its old fleet. And it also fits the Make in India

programme perfectly. We do not have any competitor in this because we feel we are the best and this is an absolutely new product with new radar, new equipment, different software and enhanced fuselage.

Well, you did offer MiG-35 previously to India under the medium multirole combat aircraft (MMRCA) tender in 2007. But you were not shortlisted and eventually Rafale was selected. Was it not a setback for you?

Our maintenance cost is almost 35 per cent lower than Rafale. But the Indian government took its own decision and we honour that. We are now exploring new opportunities in the fighter programme with promises of local production. We are soon beginning a new round of discussions on our offer of MiG-35 to India.

What is a good number for you to start the localisation process for the MiG-35?

It depends on the demand made by India. Our production plan is ready.

Do you feel India's confidence in MiG has taken a hit — since difficulties in procuring spare parts had resulted in a series of MiG-21 crashes.

This I do not know. The deliveries were done on schedule. Moreover, MiG-21 is recognised as one of the best fighters in the world. In India, the exploitation of the MiG-21 was extended until 2025.

Source: www.thehindubusinessline.com, 17 February 2017

Tarini to be Inducted into Indian Navy On 18 February 17

The Indian Navy's second ocean going sailboat Tarini will be inducted at a ceremony scheduled to be held at the INS Mandovi Boat Pool on evening of 18 February 2017. Admiral Sunil Lanba, Chief of Naval Staff will also be present on the occasion. INSV Tarini is a sloop built by M/s Aquarius Shipyard Pvt Ltd at Divar, Goa. The sail boat Tarini is being inducted into the Navy and is slated to be the platform for First Indian All Women Circumnavigation of the Globe expedition of the Indian Navy.

The boat has been built to a stock design by Van de Stadt, Netherlands called Tonga 56. The hull is made of wooden core fiberglass sandwich construction for a better performance than aluminum and steel. INSV Tarini carries a suite of six sails including a Main sail, Head sails (Genoa and stay sails), Downwind sails and Storm sail. Her mast is 25 meters tall and has been custom built by M/s Southern Spars, Cape Town, for sailing in extreme conditions. She boasts a Raymarine navigation suite and an array of latest satellite communication systems through which she can be contacted anywhere in the world.

The trials of the newly built INSV Tarini were successfully completed on 30 January 17 and all the learning experience from INSV Mhadei has been incorporated in this vessel right from the start. The keel of the vessel was laid by the Defence Minister, Shri Manohar Parrikar on 27 March 2016 at the Aquarius Shipyard. The construction was diligently overseen by the Warship Overseeing Team, Goa and the vessel is being delivered before the scheduled date of delivery by the boat builder. The successful construction of both the Mhadei and Tarini in Goa are a tribute to the Government's 'Make in India' policy.

INSV Tarini is almost identical to her illustrious predecessor, the iconic Mhadei which has sailed over 115000 nautical miles in the past eight years. This includes path breaking voyages like the first Indian solo circumnavigation undertaken by Capt Dilip Donde (Retd) in 2009 and first solo, non-stop and unassisted circumnavigation by Cdr Abhilash Tomy in 2013.

The boat draws her origin from the famous Tara-Tarini temple of Orissa's Ganjam district. The word Tarini means a Boat and is also a Sanskrit word for Saviour. Tara-Tarini is a patron deity for sailors and merchants and is worshipped for safety and success at sea. Tara-Tarini of Orissa is known to have historical linkages with the river Goddess Mhadei- the exclusive boat deity of the Mhadei river of Goa. Both the deities Tarini and Mhadei have sculptural similarities.

In order to promote ocean sailing activities and to encourage women empowerment, the Indian Navy conceptualized the idea of the First Indian All Women Circumnavigation of the Globe. A team of six women Officers led by Lieutenant Commander Vartika Joshi was selected for this project. These officers have done basic sail training courses at INWTC Mumbai followed by Navigation, Seamanship, Communication and Meteorology courses at various naval training schools at Kochi. After completion of theoretical courses, the officers sailed INSV Mhadei to Vizag for

the International Fleet Review 2016 and thereafter to Mauritius and back. Following that, they sailed the boat on a grueling voyage to Cape Town in Dec 16. The boat is skippered by Lieutenant Commander Vartika Joshi and crew members include Lieutenant Commander Pratibha Jamwal, Lieutenant Aishwarya Boddapati, Lieutenant Patarapalli Swathi, Lieutenant Sh Vijaya Devi and Lieutenant Payal Gupta.

Source: pib.nic.in/newsite, 17 February 2017

Deck-Based Ka-226 Sparked Indian Navy's Interest

Indian Navy took interest in the naval version of the KAMOV Ka-226T light multi-role helicopter, reported Lenta.Ru citing Indian Chief of Naval Staff Adm. Sunil Lanba who had visited booth of Russian Helicopters Corporation at Aero India 2017 show held in Bangalore. Indian military see Ka-226T as a patrol and SR aircraft, as well as transport helicopter. Representatives of Russian Helicopters Corp announced they are ready to consider arrangement of production of naval Ka-226T helicopters at the joint Russian-Indian venture facilities. Currently, the Ka-226T ship-based version is passing trials. An intergovernmental agreement providing that India would buy at least 200 light helicopters Ka-226 was signed in October 2016. According to the contract, 40 aircraft would be supplied turnkey from Russia, and other 160 helicopters would be assembled in India. Indian government authorities estimate the final need for this type of helicopters to be twice as high. The twin-rotor light multi-role helicopter Ka-226T has maximum takeoff weight of 3.6 tons and is capable to carry up to 1 ton of payload, said the manufacturer's official. The distinctive feature is modular design. The helicopter easily integrates either a transport cabin to carry up to six persons, or modules with special-purpose equipment.

Source: www.indiandefensenews.in, 20 February 2017

Iran launches major Naval exercise in northern Indian Ocean

Iranian naval forces have launched the final stage of a large-scale drill north of the Indian Ocean to enhance their defense capabilities, Press TV reports. Navy Commander Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari announced the beginning of the maneuver, code-named Velayat 95, on Sunday. "The aim of the Velayat 95 drill is to upgrade the country's defensive capabilities and send Iran's message of peace and friendship to the regional countries," the Navy chief said aboard the Sahand warship.

The exercises are being held in an area of 2 million square kilometers, spanning the Strait of Hormuz, the Sea of Oman, north of the Indian Ocean and the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait. Surface and subsea vessels and naval helicopters have been deployed in operational formations to carry out missions across the waters.

Source: vestnikkavkaza.net, 26 February 2017



Disruption of trade in India-Pacific region to have adverse effect on Global Economy: India Navy chief

The India-Pacific region which covers 60 percent of the world population is confronted with both traditional and non-traditional challenges, adding the fact that any disruption of trade in the region will have an adverse effect on both regional as well as global economy, India Navy chief Sunil Lamba said.

After listing these, Admiral Lamba said the traditional challenges include unresolved sovereignty issues, territorial disputes, contradictory positions on international norms, maritime muscle-flexing and general militarisation of the region. Among nontraditional threats, he named piracy and maritime terrorism. While addressing at the Geoeconomic Dialogue on 'Indo-Pacific: Possibilities and Portents', the Naval Chief added, "This is the fastest-growing region in the world; hence the region is becoming power centre."

In his address, he also outlined the country's viewpoint as far as the region is concerned. Lamba said that the country is charting its course of economic growth using a civilizational ethos of realism, coexistence, cooperation and partnership. In achieving this role, he said that Indian Navy will continue to be 'Net security provider' in the Indian Ocean Region. He elaborated that to achieve these goals, the Indian Navy has taken a number of initiatives, such as Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations, anti-piracy operations, Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and resource sharing with other navies in the Indian Ocean.

Lamba, in his closing remark, said India's economic growth and our aspirations of empowerment of our masses would be adversely effected by any disruption of peace and stability in the region. Thus, India's and Indian Navy's Maritime Strategy is built on strategic deterrence, maritime cooperation and capacity building. He hoped that the Indo-Pacific region emerges as a 'region of opportunities' and assured the audience the Indian Navy will do its utmost to play its role as India's maritime power and over come the portents to the extent feasible.

Source: www.business-standard.com, 16 February 2017

Vessel Oversupply to Continue in Chemical Shipping

Freight rates on long-haul routes will continue to be challenged by surplus large vessels over the next two years, according to the latest edition of *Chemical Forecaster*, published by global shipping consultancy Drewry. Time charter rates weakened in 2016, especially for larger tankers, and freight rates on major long-haul routes dropped. Although the trade volume from the US to Europe and northeast Asia surged in 2016, the appearance of speculative vessels brought rates down. The fleet will continue to expand because of the large number of orders placed in previous years, but growth will be subdued compared to 2015-16. While deliveries and ordering have reduced in 2016, there are still many ships scheduled to be delivered in the next five years because of heavy ordering during 2014 and 2015.

More demolitions are expected because of new regulations that will come into force in 2017. Coupled with the implementation of the Ballast Water Treatment Convention (BWTC) in September 2017, the adoption of the global 0.5 per cent sulphur cap may potentially accelerate the rate of vessel demolition towards the end of 2020. However, this is likely to have little impact on fleet supply, as most of the older ships are of less than 10,000 dwt, and thus, the capacity that can be scrapped will be a small percentage of the total fleet.

Time charter rates weakened further in the fourth quarter of 2016, more so for larger tankers. “We expect fleet oversupply to persist in 2017 and time charter rates for larger ships, especially MRs, to decline because of stiff competition. However, rates for vessels in the smaller categories are likely to remain stable in 2017,” commented Drewry’s lead analyst for chemical shipping Hu Qing. “The chemical fleet grew by 5.2 per cent in 2016 and is expected to expand by 3.3 per cent to the end of 2017, which will continue squeezing rates on major routes over the next two years. New orders and deliveries are also expected to decline further because of the depressed market and financial woes of shipyards,” added Ms Hu.

A comparison of total China commodity chemicals imports up to November 2016 carried out by analysts RLA Associates showed an increase of over 2.7 million tonnes; the major reason is methanol imports rising by just over 3 million tonnes with significant shipment increases from New Zealand and Trinidad and Tobago by one million tonnes and 544,000 tonnes respectively. For the latter, this is quite a considerable growth as the previous year’s annual figure for this specific trade was only 233 tonnes.

This has resulted from a slowdown of methanol exports from the Caribbean islands to the USA freeing up supply. Iran remains the largest supplier of methanol to China accounting for 29 per cent of total methanol imports, increasing its shipments from 2.2 million tonnes in 2015 to nearly 2.4 million tonnes this year.

Chinese projects in methanol to olefin (MTO) and methanol to propylene (MTP) have been the main agent for the rise in methanol projects globally. In 2015, the Chinese MTO and MTP capacity increased by 21 per cent to over 8.5 million tpa and this is expected to increase further by more than 3.6 million tpa over the next few years. Among the other products, the next two sizeable increases have been for paraxylene and MTBE by 569,000 tonnes and 217,000 tonnes respectively.

Among the major significant contractions, ethylene glycol imports declined the most by over 1.2 million tonnes. Supplies from the Middle East and Asia declined by 706,000 tonnes and 658,000 tonnes respectively. Volumes from Saudi Arabia dropped the most by 534,000 tonnes, but despite this decline is still the largest supplier for ethylene glycol accounting for 46 per cent of total imports this year. A new pattern was observed for North American ethylene glycol supplies, with declines in shipments of 106,000 tonnes from the USA being more than offset by a rise from Canada by 198,000 tonnes. There were also lower volumes of cargoes for acrylonitrile, other xylenes and styrene but the declines were comparatively of a smaller scale.

A year-to-date comparison of total China commodity chemicals exports for 2016 shows a decrease of 199,000 tonnes. Methanol exports dropped by 78 per cent to 32,000 tonnes this year, followed by paraxylene and benzene slowing down by 44,000 tonnes and 34,000 tonnes respectively. Furthermore, ethanol volumes were marginally up, with the remaining products either having no change or declining marginally. Based purely on changes in year-to-date trade figures, total China exports of commodity chemicals in 2016 would decrease by 44 per cent from 2015, while China imports of commodity chemicals would increase by 9 per cent. Commenting on China and the chemical markets more widely, leading market analyst Barry Luthwaite of BRL Shipping says that China continues to become more self-sufficient. "In the last six months, there has been a drive to build stainless steel newbuildings for domestic and export ownership. China's Sinochem Shipping has come from nowhere in a year to rise to the world's second largest owner of chemical tankers in unit terms, boasting a total of 39 units aggregating 61.3 million dwt.

“The owner will not stop there, as it is poised to order, from Chinese yards, a series of up to 40 28-tank, 40,000 dwt vessels. Gaps in the market have been studied and will be filled by Sinochem as far as possible, with one of its biggest customers being Dow Chemical Company. Sinochem wishes to become a truly global operator on long-haul business across the Atlantic, and to explore two-way cargoes. It is targeting Asian, regional and transpacific trades, but there could be a question mark over transpacific trade for all operators given the new US trade policy.”

Source: www.tankershipping.com, 17 February 2017

Hanjin Shipping's collapse amid woes in shipping and shipbuilding industries

Hanjin Shipping, which was once ranked as the first (domestic) and seventh (global) largest carrier, was declared bankrupt at the court today. Founded in 1977, Hanjin Shipping underwent a severe management crisis amid global recession in the shipping industry and high charterage since 2011. After going into court receivership last September, the shipping giant will disappear in history with vain hopes of “protecting the country with land, marine, and air transportation business.” The collapse was a mixture of bad management decisions when it rested on their laurels and made long-term contracts at high price, coupled with the government’s obsession with financial ideologies.

Last year, Daewoo Shipbuilding & Marine Engineering received its restructuring approval from the creditors on conditions that it will strive to stand back on its feet. This year, Hanjin Shipping went bankrupt. However, for the past several months, the biggest asset Korea lost was human resources. As the downsizing of Daewoo caused ripple effect on small and medium-sized ship builders, the industry as a whole already had to let go approximately 20,000 employees. Among those laid off, most were kicked out without their salaries, let alone severances. Moreover, brain leakage is cutting back the national technological competency, as seasoned engineers designing core technology for Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) carriers were reemployed to competitors in Japan and Middle East countries.

Once a corporate employing around 1,300 people, Hanjin Shipping is now left with 50-some employees who are settling sequestered assets and preparing their

“corporate funeral.” What’s more, “for rent” signs are placed everywhere on the streets of Joongang-dong, Busan, where it was once called the “mecca of shipping industry.” Busan, Ulsan, and South Gyeongsang provincial regions, which traditionally depended heavily on shipbuilding and shipping, sighed and now woes, but to the eyes of the government which only stressed the cause for restructuring, their woes are merely whining.

The government argues that it will inject funds to shore up national competency in these industries. However, the plan is no more than mending the barn after the horse is stolen. The 6.5 trillion won budgeted to subsidize the Korean shipping industry already exceeds far higher than the 4 trillion won to 4.6 trillion won allocated to liquidate Hanjin Shipping in the first place. At the current time, the government plans to charge this huge amount of money to tax-payers to increase Hyundai Merchant Marine’s capital and acquire assets including terminals. This clearly proves that the ongoing restructuring process is no more than a stopgap measure implemented by the rule of thumb. Furthermore, the government seems to consider its Korea Development Bank as an automatic teller machine, as it is already reviewing plans to inject additional fund when only 380 billion won is left from the allotted 4.2 trillion won to finance Daewoo.

The Minjoo Party’s former Moon Jae-in commented on the recent collapse that watching the government settle the Hanjin Shipping bankruptcy made me furious, and former co-leader of People’s Party Ahn Cheol-soo said that (the incumbent office) will be held responsible for the current crisis. Nonetheless, what Korea urgently needs at the moment is a revitalized main street economy with reviving industries and higher number of jobs, instead of political bashing. This can only be done under bipartisan decision which factors in both the troubled industry but also the economy as a whole, rather than forcing to apply financial theories. Presidential candidates should no longer sit on the fence as well.

Source: www.hellenicshippingnews.com, 20 February 2017

Japan, EU agree to push bilateral trade deal

Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida said Friday that he and European Union Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom had confirmed their resolve to swiftly conclude

free trade negotiations between the two economies. “We reaffirmed that it is extremely important (to reach) a broad agreement ... as soon as possible in order to counter protectionist moves,” Kishida told reporters after meeting with Malmstrom in Bonn. “We agreed to continue negotiations and keep the momentum,” Kishida said, adding that he and the EU trade chief had agreed to promptly arrange the next round of negotiations. While a broad agreement is now within sight, the parties remain divided over certain aspects of market access and tariff removal.

The meeting, requested by the EU side, came on the sidelines of a two-day foreign ministerial session of the Group of 20 major economies through Friday. The Japan-EU trade negotiations are continuing against a backdrop of concern that U.S. President Donald Trump’s election last November on an “America First” platform is part of a rising tide of protectionism worldwide. There is also pressure to clinch a deal before elections in major European nations this year. France is due to hold the first round of its presidential election in April, while Germany is preparing for a federal election in September.

According to a French diplomatic source, it could be difficult to conclude the agreement by the end of the year if negotiations do not end soon. EU negotiators have requested market access for the bloc’s dairy products, meat, timber and wine at levels higher than Japan agreed to in the Trans-Pacific Partnership multilateral trade deal. Japan, meanwhile, is asking for the European Union to remove its tariffs on Japanese vehicles and electronic devices, which are 10 percent and up to 14 percent. Under the TPP, the United States agreed to remove its 2.5 percent tariff on Japanese auto imports over 25 years. Japan has urged the European Union to eliminate its auto tariff at a quicker pace. Signed by 12 Pacific Rim countries in February last year, the TPP is now effectively dead after Trump issued an executive order to pull the United States out of the pact soon after taking office last month.

Source: www.japantimes.co.jp, 21 February 2017

India’s Chabahar Port plan runs into Iran loan application hurdle

India’s ambitious plan to develop Chabahar port in Iran has hit yet another snag—over what is being seen as an inordinate delay on the part of Iran to seek a \$150 million loan from India. Eight months have passed since the loan agreement was

signed for the port's development, but the Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) is still awaiting completion of an application from the Port and Maritime Organization of Iran with instructions to disburse the amount. According to the agreement, the contract will be activated from the day that the loan has been disbursed. This comes in the backdrop of strains developing in US-Iran relations after the recent imposition of US sanctions on the West Asian country over its missile programme.

Chabahar port is located on the Gulf of Oman, near Iran's border with Pakistan. It is less than 100km from Pakistan's Chinese-constructed port of Gwadar, part of a project to open up an energy and trade corridor from the Gulf to western China. "Till now, the Port and Maritime Organization of Iran has not submitted the completed application form for sourcing the loan. Reminders are being sent from the Exim Bank almost every month for the last eight months. The last reminder was sent in the first week of February," said a person aware of the development requesting anonymity. The Chabahar port will allow India access to landlocked Afghanistan and energy-rich Central Asia through Jawaharlal Nehru and Kandla ports on India's west coast. India has also built a 218km-road link connecting Delaram with Zaranj in Afghanistan, which is adjacent to Iran's border. Also, the port will promote Indian strategic interests in the Gulf and Strait of Hormuz. "The delays from Iranian side is because they don't have any interesting project proposals," said an Indian government official requesting anonymity.

A 10-year commercial contract for the development and operations of Chabahar port was signed between India Ports Global Pvt. Ltd and Iran's Arya Banader on 23 May 2016 in Tehran during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. India Ports Global is a consortium of Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust and Kandla Port Trust. The agreement commits India to equipping and operating the terminal for 10 years. The first person quoted above added that the loan disbursement is not possible until the application is completed by the state-owned Port and Maritime Organization. According to the terms of agreement, India has to make \$150 million credit available for the development of phase one of Chabahar port within four months of receiving the application. India also has to equip the cargo and container terminals with \$85 million worth of equipment within one-and-a-half years of funding. Experts believe that port's development should be expedited. "India did make a strategic move to turn the Iranian port into a transit hub bypassing Pakistan...However, at this point, the ground operationalization looks far from reality. A delay in operationalization of the credit has implications for India in terms of connectivity and heart of Asia policy,

with Afghanistan at the centre. Also, as a pressure point for Pakistan, given the volume of trade through Chabahar, would impact trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan,” said Shweta Singh, an assistant professor at South Asian University in New Delhi. The delay comes in the backdrop of India nearly finalizing the equipment purchase tender for Chabahar port, located in Sistan-Balochistan province on Iran’s south-eastern coast. India’s ministry of shipping has floated global tenders for seven packages to buy equipment, the bids for which are being evaluated. “The equipment specifications were finalized last year in November after consultations with the Iranian government and by February-end, we are hopeful of giving purchase orders. We are going to go for the best quality and cost effective equipment,” said a second Indian government official requesting anonymity.

Source: www.livemint.com, 27 February 2017

S. Korean Government to Assist in Recapitalization of Hyundai Merchant Marine

-Jung Min-hee

Hyundai Merchant Marine held an extraordinary general meeting of shareholders on February 24 at its headquarters located in Seoul and decided to increase the number of shares to be issued from 600 million to one billion and the limit on the total nominal value of its convertible bonds from 800 billion won (US\$680 million) to 2 trillion won (US\$1.7 billion). This decision is to benefit from recapitalization assistance from Korea Ships & Oceans, a corporation the South Korean government set up in order to assist in the growth of the shipping industry. Korea Ships & Oceans is scheduled to provide 720 billion won (US\$612 million) for Hyundai Merchant Marine for the purpose by early next month.

Specifically, approximately 10 container carriers of Hyundai Merchant Marine are to be purchased at a market price of 130 billion won (US\$110 million) and then the 720 billion won (US\$612 million), which is equivalent to the difference between the market price and the book value, is to be supplied in the form of participation in paid-in capital increase and convertible bond acquisition. 150 billion won (US\$127 million) is expected to be supplied based on participation in paid-in capital increase with the rest supplied via convertible bond acquisition. After the recapitalization,

Hyundai Merchant Marine can keep using the ships at low charter rates based on sales and leaseback, that is, repurchase of the ships from Korea Ships & Oceans.

Source: www.businesskorea.co.kr, 27 February 2017

Haropa Ports sees double digit maritime trade with India

France-based Haropa port expects maritime trade with India to grow at double digit this calendar year after having reported 7% growth in 2016, said Herve Martel, CEO - Port of Le Havre & President- HAROPA ports. “We have received encouraging response from the Indian policy makers as also from port, shipping lines & Indian trade during our four day visit to India and we hope to build upon this momentum with increasing French investments taking place in India,” Martel said at the concluding leg of the multi city road show that took place in Delhi, Chennai, Ahmedabad and finally in Mumbai. There are over 1,000 French subsidiaries, including Sanofi (SNYNF), Arkema (V1S.MU), Dassault, Alstom, Total (TOTB.F) etc, in India. The road show has evinced substantial interest with top business conglomerates from India including Maruti Suzuki, Reliance, Arvind, Jubilant and AIA Engineering among others interacting with the French port delegation to make it their Logistic Gateway for exports to Europe, as well as their preferred transshipment hub for their exports to Africa & US, Martel said.

Haropa ports with its "S- One-"Next Gen Single Window Port Community systems from M/s SOGET and ably complemented by French customs has enabled productivity gains for entire logistics community and ensured fluidity along the entire supply chain to ensure clearance of cargo in less than five minutes, thereby bringing down the operational cost for the trade- said Capt Avinash Batra- Chairman Seahorse ship agencies who represent HAROPA Ports in India A host of dignitaries including Ms Malini Shankar (Director General of Shipping), Shri Neeraj Bansal (Dy Chairman JNPT), Mr. Yves Perrin (French Consul General -Mumbai) graced the event in Mumbai, along with senior members & stakeholders encompassing the entire Maritime, Trade, Shipping & Logistics fraternity.

The visiting delegation also visited Jawaharlal Nehru Port in Nhava Sheva and held discussions with Chairman JNPT, Dy Chairman JNPT and other senior officials at JNPT, JNCH & CISF with a view to enhance cooperation and facilitate trade growth

between JNPT & HAROPA ports and also exchange best practices and solutions to ensure "effective ease of doing business" In Delhi the delegation held interactive meeting with senior officials in Indian Ports Association and have committed to share the excellent practices at Haropa that facilitates seamless exim logistics to ensure ease of doing business. In Chennai, Mr. P. Raveendran (Chairman Chennai Port Trust) & Mr Bhaskarachar (CMD- Kamarajar Port) graced the event.

Source: www.marinelink.com, 27 February 2017



MARINE ENVIRONMENT



Toxic Chemicals Affect Marine Life in Deep Sea Trenches

Pollution has affected much of the world. It has even reached to places that people have thought to be inaccessible. Toxic chemicals affect marine life even in deep sea trenches. Much of the toxic chemicals that have been found in deep sea marine creatures are ones that have been banned since the 1970s. High levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) have been discovered. Other pollutants were found as well as deep as 10 kilometers below sea level. These toxic chemicals have been in marine life from the Marianas Trench. This is 1,300 kilometers from Japan. The same situation has been seen in another area. The Kermadec Trench is 1,500 kilometers from New Zealand and marine life there are also affected by toxic pollutants.

Dr. Alan Jamieson is the lead author of the study. He has said that finding the pollutants in such remote areas show the long-term effects pollution has to the Earth. He has noted that it is a legacy that man is leaving for future generations to deal with. The levels found in marine life in the deep-sea trenches are comparable to those found in Suruga Bay in Japan. The area is said to be one of the most industrially polluted zones in the Pacific. That such levels could also be found in marine life from the sea trenches shows how much pollution has reached even remote areas.

More research would still be done on how the toxic pollutants are affecting marine life in the sea trenches, according to The Independent. Causes that has led to pollutants going into the deep trenches include accidents, leak from landfills and even deliberate dumping. Many of the pollutants either drifted down or have been from dead creatures who have eaten them. Many of the pollutants do not degrade easily and can accumulate. The animals that were found to have toxic chemicals in them include crustaceans from the Marianas Trench. These were found to have PCBs 50 times higher than average, as Tech Times reports. Pollution is an issue that faces modern society. This has reached even remote areas. Toxic chemicals affect marine life in deep sea trenches. A study finds that the Ventura Fault can be an origin for strong earthquakes.

Source: www.itechpost.com, 16 February 2017

Chennai Port Trust to procure response vessel after Kamarajar port oil spill

Chennai Port Trust is now taking steps to augment its capacity to contain oil spills by planning to have an oil spill response vessel. This comes after Chennai's coast witnessed an oil spill when two cargo vessels collided at Kamarajar Port last month. A Chennai Port official told Express that tenders had been floated for an oil spill response vessel and other equipment worth `14 crore. The new vessel will augment the existing oil spill response vessel 'Prestige'. Interestingly, Chennai Port had oil recovery vessel 'Annam', a 23-year-old special purpose vessel used for recovery of spilt oil from the sea. It has wing tanks to store about 50-kilo litres of oil. It has one propulsion engine and one generator engine by which power supply is provided for the operation of skimmer and spill spray system.

Currently, this vessel is beyond maintenance and repair and officials believe it can't be put into use. "This is one of the reasons we are going in for a new vessel," said sources. The port official said that 'Prestige' could contain 100 tonnes of oil spill and the additional vessel would help boost the measures to contain the spill. He said that 'Prestige' was not used during the oil spill as it was too close to the shore. "They had used our booms to contain oil in Ernavoor as well as Kamarajar Port," the official said. The official said that Chennai Port is planning to procure flex barges which could contain 40 tonnes of oil besides shoreline clean-up equipment. Meanwhile, an Indian Coast Guard source said that their vessel Varad, which played a crucial role during the oil spill, will retire in March. It will be replaced by a new offshore patrol vessel. The Coast Guard also said that the Director General of Shipping had made it mandatory for all ports to have space for storing pollution response equipment. "This could result in immediate response to contain the oil spill," a Coast Guard source said.

Source: www.newindianexpress.com, 16 February 2017

Industry associations hit out as EU persists with plan to include shipping in Emissions Trading System

A majority of MEPs supported the proposal that international shipping (including non-EU flag ships) should be incorporated into the EU Emissions Trading System from 2023 if there is no comparable system operating in the IMO by 2021.

“Putting unrealistic pressure on IMO with regional measures that will gravely hurt a global sector and do very little for climate is not the way to proceed,” commented ECSA (European Community Shipowners’ Associations) secretary general Patrick Verhoeven. “We thank those MEPs that voted against the inclusion of shipping and hope this spirit will prevail in the upcoming trilogue negotiations” between representatives of the European Parliament, Council and Commission.

The ICS (International Chamber of Shipping) said it was ‘disappointed but not surprised’ by the vote, which it felt “simply risks polarising debate among IMO Member States which have already agreed to develop a strategy for reducing shipping’s CO₂ emissions in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.” “EU Member States, which are also members of IMO, now have a duty to reject these unhelpful proposals, as they are taken forward as part of the wholesale attempt to reform the EU Emissions Trading System,” added ICS director of Policy & External Relations Simon Bennett. “Trying to include thousands of small shipping companies – including thousands of companies not based in the EU – into a system designed for major EU power generating companies and steel and cement producers is only going to complicate this reform.” “Intertanko and its members consider the EU Parliament’s ambition as totally counter-productive,” commented Dragos Rauta, technical director of the international independent tanker association. “This undermines the work undertaken by IMO and may upset the spirit of cooperation under which IMO develops global rules for a global industry.” “It is disappointing that, despite the IMO Secretary General’s recent appeal to EU leadership, they still fail to recognise the crucial importance effective regulations at global level will have in this domain,” added Katharina Stanzel, Intertanko managing director. “We can only achieve global goals through widespread buy-in to international solutions for shipping.”

The German Shipowners’ Association (VDR) also added its voice saying the vote by the European Parliament sent a detrimental signal to the 172 IMO member states. “Including international shipping in the ETS jeopardises the positive outcome of the

joint negotiations within IMO, where countries like the USA, China, Brazil and India until now pulled together. Climate protection, as well as shipping, need global solutions, not a patchwork of regional approaches,” said Ralf Nagel ceo of VDR.

Source: www.seatrade-maritime.com, 16 February 2017

Tonnes of marine trash collected from Northland

Plastic bottles, tyres and television sets are among more than 1.6 million pieces of rubbish collected from Northland waterways. And volunteers behind the clean-ups have discovered an odd phenomenon linked to human marine pollution - real fish are eating small plastic fish containers that accompany sushi. Sea Cleaners - the volunteer-operated group behind the collections - is hoping to find a further \$150,000 so it can roll out the work all year round.

Since 2014, Sea Cleaners has been able to only afford a total of seven months' work in Northland but has collected a staggering 200,000 litres of waste - more than 1.6 million individual pieces - in that time. The volume of rubbish hints at a large scale marine pollution problem in Northland. Marine conservationist and diving guru Wade Doak described the volume of rubbish as "colossal". "Everyone talks about the impact on fish, and whales, but what they don't realise is that microscopic particles of plastics are going back up the food chain, and into our own diets." He said responsibility came back to individuals, who were still deciding to use plastic items, when alternatives were available. His granddaughter snorkelled this week, he said, and saw more plastic than fish.

Source: www.nzherald.co.nz, 18 February 2017

Fishers concerns about catch at Holloways Beach with skin lesions

FISHERMEN fear fish being caught off a Cairns beach with horrific skin wounds are showing symptoms of marine pollution. Cairns Recreational Fishing Stake Holders (CAREFISH) co-ordinator Paul Aubin has received four reports from fishers who have caught sharks and barramundi with large skin lesions off Holloways Beach

during the past month. Mr Aubin took photos of a wounded blacktip shark about four weeks ago, reporting the issue to Fisheries Queensland. “With the shark, it looks like it’s had some chunks taken out of its back,” he said. “Around its fins, it’s all red. “And around under its mouth, it’s all red. It looked suss.”

He feared the skin lesions were symptomatic of poor water quality or water pollution. “It could be the same thing that happened in Gladstone (Harbour). A stress-related thing,” he said. “But we don’t know what it could be. It could be something toxic, or it could even be a staph infection, something which is contagious to humans.”

A Fisheries Queensland spokeswoman said a post mortem and pathological tests would be required to diagnose the cause of the lesions on the fish. “In this case, the shark in the photo was released alive by fishers and a sample could not be provided for testing,” she said. She said incidents of sick fish or fish deaths should be reported to the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection’s pollution hotline on 1300 130 372.

Source: www.heraldsun.com.au, 18 February 2017

Microplastics In the Marine Environment Must Stop, UN Launches Campaign

-Donna Bellevue

Due to the severe devastation caused by microplastics in the marine environment, the United Nations Environment Program has launched an unprecedented global campaign, urging everyone to eliminate the use of microplastics. Also criticized is the excessive, wasteful use of single-use plastics often found in households. The organization says that people must start to act now to save the world’s seas and oceans from irreversible damage before it’s too late.

Plastic pollution has become a critical issue as tons of it could be found surfing onto Indonesian beaches, settling onto the ocean floor at the North Pole, and appearing increasingly through the food chain onto our dinner tables. The Executive Director of UNEP, Erik Solheim, explained the gravity of the situation at the announcement of

the campaign. He added that the problem has gone on for so long, and that it must stop.

The campaign, called the Clean Seas drive, hopes to eliminate microplastics in the marine environment by urging countries and businesses to take ambitious measures to eliminate these materials from cosmetic products. Also, it calls for the banning of single-use plastic bags, a move scientists say can dramatically reduce the amount of disposable plastic items by 2022. Another way that the campaign hopes governments will implement is putting a tax on all plastic products to dissuade consumers, the United Nations News Center reports.

Ten countries have already pledged support to the initiative with far-reaching promises. Indonesia, for example, has expressed their commitment to slash its marine litter by 70 percent by 2025. Uruguay agrees to tax single-use plastic bags later this year, while Costa Rica promises to take measures to dramatically reduce single-use plastic through better waste management and education, the Sky News reports.

There are more than 8 million tons of microplastics leaking in the marine environment every year, the UN says. That is the same as a garbage truck loaded with plastic being dumped into the ocean every minute. The organization also warns that if plastics continue to spill in the oceans, by 2025, there will be one ton of plastic for every three tons of fish.

Source: www.itechpost.com, 24 February 2017

Arctic Sea Ice Expansion, Blame It to Air Pollution Caused by Human

New study reveal the main cause of Arctic sea ice expansion. Particles from air pollution is the most seen reason. Science Daily reported that it was human fault who have been altering the Arctic sea ice. It is because of the prolonged effects of air pollution which is a result of burning fossil fuels and other harmful substances on air. To recall, scientists have been monitoring such sea ice loss since the mid-1979s. Now, they have seen such huge changes in the subsequent decrease of sea ice in the Arctic from 1975 up to year 2005. According to Earth Justice, the year 2012 when scientists from the U.S. National Snow and Data Center have confirmed an extent

record to low. That same year has recorded the lowest amounts of Arctic sea ice since on the year 1970's. Furthermore, sea ice thickness was recorded dragged to a 40-50% making it closer to melting.

Meanwhile, scientists are on their way to slow the pace of Arctic sea ice melting. An assessment made by the United Nations Environment Program along with the World Meteorological Organization believe in the possibility of reducing emissions.

They focus is on the two common air pollutants, the soot, and smog. Specifically, black carbon and tropospheric ozone which only remains in the atmosphere in days or months is the focus of the study. Reduction of these so-called "short-lived" climate warming pollutants was seen to contribute in the goal of the researchers in decreasing the melting of Arctic sea ice. Rosenthal, the author on the UNEP/WMO assessment said, "this would mean that reducing the emissions of these "short-lived" climate pollutants would have fast climate benefits. Besides, black carbon in air pollution is the main cause of fast melting of ice and snow." If humans would help in decreasing the black carbon causing air pollution instead of increasing it will cause great help in the Arctic sea ice. Scientists foresee human help in this goal to decrease the effects of air pollution in the Arctic region.

Source:www.sciencetimes.com, 25 February 2017

Something Fishy: Organisms from Suez Canal Put Mediterranean Marine Life at Risk

- Yonatan Sredni

Contrary to the message of a popular song from Disney's 1989 animated hit film *The Little Mermaid*, not everything is so wonderful "under the sea". According to a new Tel Aviv University study, foreign species crossing the Suez Canal are harming indigenous species and habitats in the Mediterranean Sea, damaging vital marine resources and raising concerns about human health issues.

The influx of non-indigenous species (NIS) from the Suez Canal, one of the world's most important channels of commerce, into the Mediterranean Sea can be traced back to the canal's 2015 expansion by Egypt. While the expansion of the canal

deepens the main waterway, and provides ships with a 35 km (22 mile) channel parallel to it, it has had some undesirable effects as well.

“The most invaded marine basin in the world”

“The Mediterranean Sea is the most invaded marine basin in the world,” Professor Bella Galil of the Israel National Center for Biodiversity Studies at Tel Aviv University’s Steinhardt Museum of Natural History, and the lead author of a study published in December in *Management of Biological Invasions*, said in a statement. “The number of non-indigenous species greatly increased between 1970 and 2015. 750 multicellular non-indigenous species were recorded in the Mediterranean Sea, far more than in other European seas, because of the ever-increasing number of Red Sea species introduced through the Suez Canal.”

Japanese jellyfish in the Mediterranean

In 2015, during a routine survey by Israeli marine scientists, a green fluorescent jellyfish, usually spotted in Japan, was observed for the first time in the Mediterranean Sea. The creature’s appearance was a clear example of a non-indigenous species popping up in the Mediterranean Sea.

In their new study, the authors present data that marine-protected areas in the eastern Mediterranean, from Turkey to Libya, have been overwhelmed by non-indigenous species and serve as veritable “hot spots” of bioinvasion. Biotic communities are already fragile, suffering from man-made problems such as pollution and overfishing. The colonization of these communities by NIS redistributes nutritional resources, removes important actors and renders them more susceptible to extinction.

For example, eastern mediterranean algae-dominated rocky habitats have been decimated by large populations of herbivorous fish introduced through the Suez Canal. The two hungry grazers, *Siganus luridus* and *S. rivulatus*, have transformed lush rocky reefs into barren ones, dramatically reducing the quality of the habitat and altering the community structure and food web. Within 30 years, a small Red Sea mussel has replaced the native *mytilid* along the entire Mediterranean coast of Israel, forming dense nearly mono-specific species “carpets.”

A slow reaction

Despite a century of scientific documentation of marine bioinvasions in the Mediterranean Sea, the implementation of a management policy has been slow. The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean, part of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) Regional Seas Program, adopted an “Action Plan concerning species introductions and invasive species in the Mediterranean Sea” in 2003. But the UNEP has “shied away from discussing, let alone managing, the influx of tropical non-indigenous animals and plants introduced through the Suez Canal. So far, no prevention and management measures have been implemented,” according to Prof. Galil and her associates.

A hope for effective intervention

The authors of the study led a discussion on effective management of non-indigenous species introductions into the Mediterranean Sea at a EuroMarine workshop that took place in Ischia, Italy, in 2016. The discussion resulted in the “Ischia Declaration” that laid down principles for an effective, science-based, transboundary management of the problem. The declaration was then approved by the general assembly of EuroMarine, a network of 73 research institutions and universities, funded by the European Union. “We hope that this new research will be used to construct a science-based effective management of marine bioinvasions, and prevent, or at least minimize, the influx of additional non-indigenous species into the Mediterranean,” Prof. Galil said in a statement. “Time will tell whether these aims are achieved or legislators and management continue to put off confronting this difficult issue and pass the environmental, economic and social burden to future generations.” In the meantime, the researchers are currently investigating pollution and other NIS-related factors.

Source: nocamels.com, 26 February 2017



Despite Trump's Threats to Iran, India Must Push Ahead on Chabahar

Sumitha Narayanan Kutty

The Trump administration's recent move to sanction dozens of Iranian entities has raised concerns in India, specifically over the future of the Chabahar port project. These apprehensions are justified given the strategic significance of the southern Iranian port, which will enable India to bypass Pakistan and gain direct access to Afghanistan, Central Asia and Europe. This proposal has taken over a decade to materialise and any move by the new US government to discourage economic engagement with Iran would throw a spanner in the works.

Therefore, it would be in New Delhi's best interests to safeguard its proposed investments in Chabahar and convey to Washington that Iran's most important strategic and economic partners – including Russia, China, Japan and South Korea – would not like to see the Iranian nuclear deal unravel.

Trump's choices: deal, new deal or no deal?

Despite his Twitter rhetoric, Trump's new sanctions against Iran are not exactly new. This policy is in line with that of the Obama administration to keep a strict check on Iran's behaviour through non-nuclear sanctions even after the nuclear deal. Non-nuclear sanctions include those against Iranian or related entities and individuals who support terrorism, human rights violations and, as in the latest case, the country's ballistic missiles programme. They are separate from the sanctions that were lifted as per the Iranian nuclear deal, the future of which is undoubtedly of great concern today.

The Iranian nuclear deal, or the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, reached in 2015, was negotiated between Iran and the P5+1 countries – the US, Russia, China, the UK, France and Germany – and was facilitated by the European Union (EU). The Trump administration has repeatedly indicated that it plans to force the Iranians back to the table to renegotiate “the worst deal ever negotiated”.

However, there is zero appetite for renegotiations. The EU's Vice President Federica Mogherini, who coordinates the joint commission that implements the deal, has confirmed as much and so has Iran's President Hasan Rouhani, who labelled such talks "meaningless".

The Russians find such a move "risky" and have advised Trump to "not try to fix what is not broken". The British, while raising concerns over Iran's behaviour, have opined that the deal be properly enforced and policed. And finally, China has interestingly been the loudest on this matter since it was hit by the latest US unilateral sanctions (three Chinese companies and three Chinese individuals were on the list). Beijing has now warned the US that such moves "will not help in enhancing trust."

More importantly, there is very little appetite to return to the past scenario of multilateral economic sanctions against Iran. This realisation seems to have dawned on the Republican camp and, if shared across the administration, would prove helpful in preserving the deal.

Paul Ryan, the speaker of the US House of Representatives, has stated that the deal is very likely to stay in place, "I don't think you're going to go back and reconstitute the multilateral sanctions that were put in place." Trump also appears to now be talking about "rigorously enforcing the deal." In a recent interview, when he was specifically asked whether he would tear up the deal, he remained non-committal.

On red flags and a coordinated approach

This brings us to how New Delhi could prepare and proceed on the matter. What red flags should the Modi government watch out for and in what ways can it safeguard India's proposed investments in Iran going forward? New Delhi should specifically look for announcements from the US Treasury targeting the Iranian port operator Aria Banader Iranian Co., which has partnered with Indian Ports Global Pvt. Ltd. to develop the Chabahar port. This private company, according to Iran's Ports and Maritime Organisation, currently also operates a terminal in the Anzali port facing the Caspian Sea.

In the past, a port operating company, Tidewater, believed to be functioning in Bandar Abbas and owned by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), was blacklisted in 2011, making it difficult to conduct trade through the port. The

company remains in the list but the secondary sanctions on Bandar Abbas have been lifted as per the nuclear deal.

If Aria Banader was found to have linkages with the IRGC – which is unavoidably deeply engaged in Iran’s key sectors – or other blacklisted individuals by Washington, it would be highly problematic for India. This could indeed have been one of the reasons that upset New Delhi when the Iranian government failed to mention they had leased the port to the private firm at the signing of the MoU in 2015. It meant spending additional time on the due diligence and vetting of its new business partner in Chabahar.

A second proposition for the Modi government to consider is widening consultations with Asian partners who have invested or are considering investments in Iran, specifically in Chabahar. New Delhi is already working with Japan on this matter and should consider including South Korea as well.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was one of the first world leaders to call on Trump in November when he won the presidential election, and last week met him again to shore up the Japan-US alliance. It was also within these same months that the Japanese deputy foreign minister announced in Kabul that the country had reached an agreement with New Delhi to expand the Chabahar port in Iran and promised to help boost Afghan trade in the region. This could indicate that the Japanese have taken this calculated decision to proceed with investments in Iran after having consulted or engaged on the subject in some form or fashion with Washington.

Last year, the South Korean steelmaker POSCO agreed to jointly build a steel plant in Chabahar’s Free Trade Zone and use it as a springboard to more investments in Iran. Other Korean companies have also signed MoUs on electricity-generation and desalination plants in the coastal city. Joint consultations with Japan and South Korea, who are also US allies, are increasingly becoming the need of the hour as Iran and the US indulge in escalation. Here’s why – the US and Iran are no longer talking to each other. They are back to talking *at* each other.

This is a significant change – or perhaps, a return to the status quo – going forward. The direct and functional channel of communication that existed between former US Secretary of State John Kerry, Iranian foreign minister Javad Zarif and their teams looks difficult to replicate with the Trump administration.

Trump's latest moves against Iran won't unravel the Iranian nuclear deal just yet. And the Modi government's Budget allocation for the Chabahar port project demonstrates that it aims to move forward on it and is not entirely risk averse. It must, therefore, strategise to ensure its interests in Iran are protected when engaging with it becomes tricky.

Together with Tokyo, Seoul and other like-minded partners, New Delhi can drive home the point in Washington that there is greatly reduced appetite for multilateral sanctions against Iran, which are in clear violation of the nuclear deal. It needs to also underscore the reality that it will be a much harder task to wrestle Iran back into the 'sanctions box'. New Delhi cannot afford to stand by mutely while its strategic ambitions come undone for a second time.

Source: thewire.in, 16 February 2017

US Geopolitical Game in South China Sea 'Not Only Aimed at Pressuring Beijing'

On Saturday, the US navy strike group led by the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier the USS Carl Vinson and consisting of Destroyer Squadron (DESRON), Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Wayne E. Meyer (DDG 108), and aircraft from Carrier Air Wing (CVW) began what the US Navy called "routine operations" in the South China Sea. China has denounced the patrol for threatening its sovereignty and security in the South China Sea. "China always respects the freedom of navigation and overflight all countries enjoy under international law. But we are consistently opposed to relevant countries threatening and damaging the sovereignty and security of littoral countries under the flag of freedom of navigation and overflight," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told journalists commenting on the matter.

On Wednesday, Reuters, citing two unnamed US officials, reported that "China has nearly finished building almost two dozen structures on artificial islands in the South China Sea that appear designed to house long-range surface-to-air missiles." "It is not like the Chinese to build anything in the South China Sea just to build it, and these structures resemble others that house SAM [surface-to-air missiles] batteries, so the logical conclusion is that's what they are for," the agency quotes a US

intelligence official as saying. Another official said the structures appeared to be 20 meters (66 feet) long and 10 meters (33 feet) high.

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said on Wednesday he was aware of the report, though did not say if China was planning on placing missiles on the reefs.

"China carrying out normal construction activities on its own territory, including deploying necessary and appropriate territorial defense facilities, is a normal right under international law for sovereign nations," he told reporters.

Meanwhile, Foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) who were meeting on the Philippine Island of Boracay on Tuesday, noted the importance of sustaining the momentum of dialogue in easing the tensions in the disputed South China Sea. They expressed concern over the possible militarization of some areas in the region. Commenting on the developments in the region, Konstantin Sivkov, the president of the Moscow-based Academy of Geopolitical Problems noted that the coincidence in time of the US patrol in the South China Sea with the ministerial meeting of ASEAN and of the reports of China's buildings might mean a simultaneous US' pressure both on China and ASEAN. "The US is mounting military tensions in the South China Sea," he told Sputnik.

"Trying to contain China, the US is demonstrating its military activity. Hence the concern of the South Asian countries is that there is a high risk of a local conflict with participation of China, US and Japan," he added.

The expert noted that even though the risk of a large-scale conflict remains highly unlikely, there could be a local military face-off between the fleets of the US and Japan on the one hand, and China on the other. "The US is mounting military tensions in the South China Sea," he told Sputnik. The expert further noted that there is a US geopolitical game going on in the region. The reports of China's constructions on the islands are the means of this game played against Beijing. However, Washington knows only too well that China won't resort to any compromise in this issue regardless any US pressure.

Source: sputniknews.com, 23 February 2017

India's concerns over China-Pakistan Corridor 'unwarranted': Chinese media

Beijing: India's concerns over sovereignty relating to the \$46-billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is "unwarranted", Chinese state media on Friday said, asking New Delhi to take an "objective and more pragmatic" view of China's ambitious Silk Road project.

The comments in an oped piece in *Global Times* comes after foreign secretary S. Jaishankar on 22 February co-chaired the upgraded India-China Strategic Dialogue in Beijing. After the dialogue, Jaishankar told reporters that the CPEC, which runs through the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), violates India's sovereignty. The CPEC is part of the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) Initiative, the official name of the Silk Road initiative. Reacting to Jaishankar's remarks, the article said India's concerns were "unwarranted". "China respects India's sovereignty concerns. Taking a strong stand on territorial issues is important, but it's hoped India could adopt an objective and more pragmatic attitude towards the One Belt, One Road proposal."

China's foreign ministry is yet to react to India's stand. The article, however, asked India to take part in the Silk Road summit to be held in Beijing in May, stressing the "potential economic benefits" of CPEC and packaging it as a project promoting greater regional cooperation.

China's President Xi Jinping has convened the summit. Leaders of about 20 nations have confirmed participation, the Chinese foreign ministry has said without identifying them. Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Sri Lankan premier Ranil Wickramasinghe are expected to attend the event.

Calling on India to soften its stand, the article said, "New Delhi fears that the CPEC, passing through the Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, would serve the purpose of granting legitimacy to Pakistan's control over the region, and by promoting the construction of the corridor, China intends to meddle in the Kashmir dispute. These concerns are unwarranted."

"China has no intention of interfering in the territorial dispute between India and Pakistan. China has long believed that the two neighbours should solve their dispute through dialogue and consultations, and it has

repeatedly emphasised that the construction of the CPEC would not affect its stance on the issue," it said.

China's OBOR initiative's stated aim is to link countries in Asia, Africa and Europe to promote "an open and inclusive global economy" by building regional trade networks and enhancing connectivity for future growth. Also, the article said, "India should not view Pakistan's development as a threat. As long as India is willing to, China, Pakistan and India could cooperate to tap the vast economic potential in the disputed Kashmir region."

Source: www.livemint.com, 24 February 2017

Worried Over Trump, China Tries to Catch up With U.S. Navy

The PLA Navy is likely to secure significant new funding in China's upcoming defense budget as Beijing seeks to check U.S. dominance of the high seas and step up its own projection of power around the globe. China's navy has been taking an increasingly prominent role in recent months, with a rising star admiral taking command, its first aircraft carrier sailing around self-ruled Taiwan and new Chinese warships popping up in far-flung places.

Now, with President Donald Trump promising a U.S. shipbuilding spree and unnerving Beijing with his unpredictable approach on hot button issues including Taiwan and the South and East China Seas, China is pushing to narrow the gap with the U.S. Navy. "It's opportunity in crisis," said a Beijing-based Asian diplomat, of China's recent naval moves. "China fears Trump will turn on them eventually as he's so unpredictable and it's getting ready." Beijing does not give a breakdown for how much it spends on the navy, and the overall official defense spending figures it gives—954.35 billion yuan (\$139 billion) for 2016—likely understates its investment, according to diplomats. China unveils the defense budget for this year at next month's annual meeting of parliament, a closely watched figure around the region and in Washington, for clues to China's intentions. China surprised last year with its lowest increase in six years, 7.6 percent, the first single-digit rise since 2010, following a nearly unbroken two-decade run of double-digit jumps. "Certainly, the PLA Navy has really been the beneficiary of a lot of this new spending in the past 15 years," said Richard Bitzinger, Senior Fellow and Coordinator of the Military

Transformations Programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore. "We don't know how much they spend on the navy, but simply extrapolating from the quantity and the quality of things that are coming out of their shipyards, it's pretty amazing."

The Chinese navy, once generally limited to coastal operations, has developed rapidly under President Xi Jinping's ambitious military modernization. It commissioned 18 ships in 2016, including missile destroyers, corvettes and guided missile frigates, according to state media. Barely a week goes by without an announcement of some new piece of equipment, including an electronic reconnaissance ship put into service in January. Still, the PLA Navy significantly lags the United States, which operates 10 aircraft carriers to China's one, the Soviet-era Liaoning. Xu Guangyu, a retired major general in the People's Liberation Army now senior adviser to the government-run China Arms Control and Disarmament Association, said China was keenly aware of the U.S. ability to project power at sea. "It's like a marathon and we're falling behind. We need to step on the gas," Xu said.

Trump has vowed to increase the U.S. Navy to 350 ships from the current 290 as part of "one of the "greatest military buildups in American history", a move aides say is needed to counter China's rise as a military power. "We've known this is a 15-20-year project and every year they get closer to being a blue-water navy with global aspirations," said a U.S. administration official, speaking on the condition of anonymity. "What you have seen this last year and what I think you will see with the new budget is that they are moving ahead with the short-term goal of being the premier naval force in the South China Sea and the East China Sea, with the mid-term goal, of extending all the way to the Indian Ocean."

In January, China appointed new navy chief, Shen Jinlong, to lead that push. Shen has enjoyed a meteoric rise and is close to Xi, diplomatic and leadership sources say. "The navy has gotten very lucky with Shen," said a Chinese official close to the military, speaking on condition of anonymity. "Now they know for certain their support goes all the way to the top." Recent PLA Navy missions have included visits to Gulf states, where the United States has traditionally protected sea lanes, and to the South China Sea, Indian Ocean and Western Pacific, in what the state-run website StrongChina called Shen's "first show of force against the United States, Japan and Taiwan".

Last month, a Chinese submarine docked at a port in Malaysia's Sabah state, which lies on the South China Sea, only the second confirmed visit of a Chinese submarine to a foreign port, according to state media. The submarine had come from supporting anti-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia, where China has been learning valuable lessons about overseas naval operations since 2008. Chinese warships have also been calling at ports in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar, unnerving regional rival India. "It's power projection," said a Beijing-based Western diplomat, of China's navy.

Source: europe.newsweek.com, 26 February 2017

China envoy says sea dispute should not hold hostage Manila-Beijing ties

- By Alexis Romero

MANILA, Philippines — The relationship between Manila and Beijing should not be held hostage by the South China Sea (West Philippine Sea) dispute, China's ambassador to the Philippines said Monday. Chinese Ambassador Zhao Jinhua said the maritime dispute only constitutes about 1 percent of the relationship between the two countries. "We cannot allow the 1 percent to take the 99 percent as a hostage. And that is a lose-lose situation," Zhao told reporters in Malacañang. "We are glad that after your president's successful state visit to China, we are now focusing areas where both sides can benefit," he added, referring to Duterte's visit last year.

China has built artificial islands and structures in disputed areas, worrying some members of the international community who believe that the move could affect freedom of navigation. Last week, Foreign Affairs Secretary Perfecto Yasay Jr. said Southeast Asian ministers have expressed "grave concern" over what they perceived as the "militarization" of some areas in the South China Sea.

China frowned upon Yasay's statement, with Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang describing it as "baffling and regrettable." President Rodrigo Duterte claimed that the Chinese government "misunderstood" Yasay and stressed that it is not yet the time to raise the arbitral ruling that favored the Philippines with China.

“Well, I think President Duterte is very wise and also pragmatic,” Zhao said. “What is more important by enhancing cooperation in economic, trade, infrastructure, tourism, the Filipino people can benefit more from a good and cooperative relationship with China. So, in that sense, I totally agree with your president.”

Zhao said Duterte has also accepted Chinese President Xi Jinping’s invitation to visit Beijing to attend the high-level One Belt, One Road summit in May. Last year, a Hague-based arbitral tribunal voided China’s maritime claim, which covers about 90 percent of the South China Sea. China rejected the ruling, calling it “a mere piece of paper” and “illegal since day one.” Duterte has said he is ready to set aside the ruling for now to strengthen the Philippines’ relationship with China. Zhao was in Malacañang to turn over 400 transistor radios to the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO). “This is symbolic of the different projects that is a result of the bilateral communications, MOU (memorandum of understanding), that the Chinese government and the Republic of the Philippines, through the PCOO had signed last year,” PCOO Secretary Martin Andanar said. The agreement was signed during Duterte’s state visit to China last October.

Source: www.philstar.com, 27 February 2017

US-China relations: Trump meets senior official Yang Jiechi

A senior Chinese diplomat had a brief meeting with President Donald Trump while at the White House for talks with the president’s advisers. State Councillor Yang Jiechi is the first senior Chinese official to meet Mr Trump since his inauguration. Mr Yang also discussed security matters with the new US national security adviser, HR McMaster, and Jared Kushner, the president’s son-in-law. It follows tensions over trade and security between the two countries. On 9 February Mr Trump spoke to Chinese President Xi Jinping by telephone. In that call he agreed to honour the “One China” policy, backing away from previous threats to recognise the government of Taiwan, which China regards as a breakaway province.

In December Mr Trump, as president-elect, had spoken on the phone to the president of Taiwan - a break in protocol which angered Beijing. In his visit on Monday, Mr Yang also met Vice-President Mike Pence and strategist Steve Bannon, Chinese state media reported. White House press secretary Sean Spicer told

reporters that Mr Yang then "had an opportunity to say hi to the president". The talks with the Chinese delegation covered "shared interests of national security", Mr Spicer said.

In January, China's foreign ministry warned Washington against challenging Beijing's sovereignty in parts of the South China Sea. It came after Mr Spicer said the US would "make sure we protect our interests there". Barack Obama's administration refused to take sides in the dispute.

Source: www.bbc.com, 28 February 2017