



MAKING WAVES

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State-of-art ship for coastal surveillance

Paradip: The maritime security mechanism received a boost with the coast guard on Monday deploying its state-of-the-art ship Sujay for sea-route surveillance. The 105-metre-long ship is equipped with the improvised security gadgets. The stationing of Sujay will augment the infrastructure of the Paradip base. "It will provide facelift to the maritime protection mechanism of the coastline of Odisha and Bengal," said Paradip Coast Guard commandant Ashis. Sujay has joined the fleet of other coast guard ships. The base is now equipped with 50-metre-long CG ships - Samogh, Rajia Sultanam and Sarojini Naidu. Besides, the CG station here is also armed with 75-metre-long ICG Vajra offshore patrol vessel and two interceptor boats. It has a hovercraft, which can navigate in shallow sea waters. Indigenously built and designed by state-run Goa shipyard, Sujay is the largest of fleet of ships here. It has the latest communicational and navigational equipment. The vessel, based here under operational and administrative control of commander, Coast Guard region (northeast), will be deployed for the exclusive economic zone surveillance.

The ship can also carry pollution response equipment to contain oil spill in the sea. The commissioning of ICGS Sujay will enhance the coast guard's operational capability to discharge multifarious maritime tasks," a coast guard official said.

Source: telegraphindia.com, 16 Jan 2018

Maritime security on table at ASEAN heads' retreat at Rashtrapati Bhavan

Sources said Modi is likely to articulate the fact that India's Act East Policy is shaped around the ASEAN, and its centrality in the regional security architecture of the Indo-Pacific region. FOCUSING ON "maritime cooperation and security", Prime Minister Narendra Modi will host the 10 visiting ASEAN leaders at Rashtrapati Bhavan for a "retreat" on Thursday, where they are expected to discuss challenges faced by the

region. This is a clear signal to Beijing, whose assertive maritime activities have impinged on the security of almost every country in the ASEAN grouping.

While President Ram Nath Kovind will host the visiting leaders for lunch, a two-hour time slot, from 2 pm, has been kept aside for the retreat in the schedule for Thursday afternoon, which will include a walk in the Mughal Gardens at Rashtrapati Bhavan. “Politico-security relations between India and ASEAN is one of the crucial pillars of engagement... that is the reason, they will discuss maritime cooperation and security during the post-lunch session,” a government source told The Indian Express on Wednesday.

Since South China Sea has emerged as a major dispute between China and several ASEAN countries like Vietnam, Philippines, Brunei and Malaysia, the discussions will also dwell on the issue that has divided ASEAN down the middle. As there is no unanimity on how to deal with China on this issue, and India is concerned because over 40 per cent of its trade passes through the South China Sea, officials said the retreat will provide an opportunity to hold discussions on the issue.

Sources said Modi is likely to articulate the fact that India’s Act East Policy is shaped around the ASEAN, and its centrality in the regional security architecture of the Indo-Pacific region. With India’s strategic interests in Southeast and East Asia increasing, New Delhi — during the India-ASEAN commemorative summit on Thursday — is expected to assure the ASEAN countries of its “steady and strong” support towards achieving a “rules-based regional security architecture”, which takes care of the region’s interests and its peaceful development, sources said.

Officials said New Delhi will emphasise on the stakes involved, since India has strong maritime links with ASEAN countries that enable trade relations. As at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Modi will again make a pitch for jointly addressing the challenge of “fighting terrorism and violent extremism”, sources said. This assumes significance, since some of the countries — Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia — have been affected by terrorist attacks.

Besides the summit on January 25-26, Modi will hold nine bilateral meetings — the focus of these meetings will be on connectivity, commerce and culture. While he met Vietnam Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Philippines President Rodrigo Roa Duterte and Myanmar’s State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi on Wednesday, he will hold bilateral talks with the leaders of Thailand, Singapore and Brunei on Thursday,

ahead of the summit. Modi will also hold bilateral meetings with the leaders of Indonesia, Laos and Malaysia on Friday.

And after Republic Day, India will host Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen for a state visit on January 27. Meanwhile, India signed pacts on space and information and broadcasting with Vietnam, and on investment promotion with Philippines.

Source: indianexpress.com, 24 Jan 2018

Huwaisat Island Center Bolsters Saudi Maritime Security South of Arabian Gulf

Al-Huwaisat (eastern Saudi Arabia) – Abdul Hadi Habtoor

Huwaisat Island, floating at the forefront of Saudi maritime borders in the southern waters of the Arabian Gulf, has border guards patrolling the island around the clock, covering a distance of 30 nautical miles north and south. The Saudi border guards' center boasts advanced naval radar capabilities covering up to 96 nautical miles in full span. Saudi Interior Minister Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Abdulaziz inaugurated the Border Guard Center on the island on December 28, 2017. The Huwaisat Center commander Major Mohammed Abdullah Al-Dossary stressed that one of the most important tasks of this modern center in the Arabian Gulf is to guard the Kingdom's maritime borders, combat smuggling and all sorts of violations.

However, Dossary said that the center takes into account first-response guidelines and enforces an early warning policy of any unusual movements along the border or its vicinity. He added that the border guards also carry out search and rescue, guidance and assistance missions. The island enjoys a strategic location where it is bordered by the United Arab Emirates in the south and Qatar in the north. The overall area of the island is 150,000 square meter and is notably just a mile and a half from the UAE's Gaga, Khardal and Ras Ghmeis Islands. The waters of Huwaisat Island are guarded by Saudi naval patrols scouring the sea in different directions. According to Dossary, these patrols operate around the clock through armed speedboats, which are equipped with surveillance and defense systems. "The equipment you see in the island is evidence of dedicated and unbound support given by the Saudi leadership to strengthen security forces of border guards across land and sea ports to reinforce national security," he explained.

Maritime communication systems and modern technology are used to communicate with the center's control room. According to the commander, there are a number of armed naval boats lined up on the floating platform, which patrol around the clock, and cover a distance of 30 nautical miles north and south. The island has a desalination plant, indoor facilities, training classes for staffers, a 75 meter communications tower and a command and control room. It also includes recreational facilities for the center's employees, a closed gymnasium, an outdoor playground, a mosque and electric generators. As for the weather on the island, the temperature ranges from 20 to 35 degrees Celsius. The Border Guard Center also plays a role in preserving marine environment through notifying relevant authorities of any signs or possibilities of a pollution outbreak.

Source: aawsat.com, 29 January 2018

Vancouver meeting focuses on sanctions as Koreas explore détente

A meeting of states that backed South Korea in the Korean war will look at ways to better implement sanctions to push North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons, officials said, even as the North and South explore detente ahead of next month's Winter Olympics. Foreign ministers and senior officials from 20 nations will hold a full-day meeting in Vancouver on Tuesday, hosted by the United States and Canada, looking to increase diplomatic and financial pressure on North Korea to give up development of nuclear missiles capable of hitting the United States, a program that has raised fears of a new war. Canadian and U.S. officials say the meeting will discuss ways to ensure implementation of wide-ranging U.N. sanctions, including steps agreed last month to further limit Pyongyang's access to refined petroleum products, crude oil and industrial goods.

Brian Hook, the U.S. State Department's director of policy planning, said last week that participants, including U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, would probe how to boost maritime security around North Korea and options to interdict ships carrying prohibited goods in violation of sanctions. The Vancouver meeting primarily groups nations that assisted South Korea in the 1950-53 Korean War, as well as South Korea and Japan. China and Russia, which backed the North in the war but have since agreed to U.N. sanctions on Pyongyang, will not be attending.

South Korea and the United States are technically still at war with the North because the 1950-53 Korean War ended with a truce, not a peace treaty.

Tensions Easing?

The meeting was announced after North Korea tested its biggest ever intercontinental ballistic missile in late November, but now comes amid signs that tensions on the Korean peninsula are easing, at least temporarily. North and South Korea held formal talks this month for the first time in two years and Pyongyang said it would send athletes across the border to the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics to be held in South Korea next month. China, North Korea's main ally and principal trading partner, has backed successive rounds of U.N. sanctions, but has also urged dialogue to solve the crisis. It has reacted angrily to the Vancouver meeting as an example of "Cold War" thinking. China's state media said Chinese President Xi Jinping, in a phone call with U.S. President Donald Trump, stressed that a hard-earned alleviation of tensions must continue. "Maintaining international unity on the issue is extremely important," Xi said. China was ready to work with the United States to resolve the issue in an appropriate way, state broadcaster CCTV quoted the Chinese leader as saying. China's special envoy for North Korea Kong Xuanyou, speaking in an interview with Phoenix Television on Monday, urged the United States to seize the opportunity to seek direct talks with North Korea. China's state-run Global Times newspaper said the Vancouver meeting reflected Washington's desire to "highlight its dominant role in resolving the North Korean nuclear issue and cripple the clout of China and Russia." "But the meeting will likely accomplish little," it said in an editorial. Diplomats say China's absence will limit what can be achieved, while North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has shown no sign of being willing to bow to pressure to give up weapons he sees as vital to his survival.

Sanctions 'Gaps'

The White House on Friday welcomed news that China's North Korea imports plunged in December to their lowest in dollar terms since at least the start of 2014, but President Donald Trump accused Beijing last month of allowing oil into North Korea, a charge Beijing denied. Western European security sources told Reuters last month that Russian tankers had supplied fuel to North Korea on at least three occasions in recent months by transferring cargoes at sea. Russia says it observes U.N. sanctions. Eric Walsh, Canada's ambassador to South Korea, told a panel at the University of British Columbia that the uneven way sanctions were applied meant "there are a lot of gaps." "One of the things we want to do is look at how we can improve enforcement," he said. U.S. officials say hawks in the Trump administration remain pessimistic that the North-South contacts will lead anywhere.

Sources : reuters.com, 16 January 2018

How Will South Korea's New Maritime Security Forum Fare?

On January 29, while delivering a major speech in Singapore, South Korean Defense Minister Song Young-moo suggested holding a forum for maritime security in Northeast Asia later this year. Though Song did not provide much in the way of specifics, the proposal bears noting given that 2018 constitutes a big year for South Korean defense issues, including in the maritime security realm. Song's keynote address, delivered to the sixth annual IISS Fullerton Forum, which helps set the stage for the Shangri-La Dialogue – Asia's premier security forum – covered a range of security issues in the Asia-Pacific. Though there was an unsurprising emphasis on North Korea, which Song called the most serious immediate threat for Asian security, he also devoted attention to other areas, including maritime security, noting Seoul's role as the co-chairman of the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) working group on maritime security and its holding of the International Fleet Review later this year.

But in terms of new proposals, the one that stood out was Song's suggestion of a new Northeast Asia forum on maritime security. Specifically, in his speech, Song proposed the holding of a forum "for maritime peace and order" in Northeast Asian waters, initially featuring the navies of South Korea, the United States, Japan, China, and Russia. Though this would be the initial group of countries involved, Song went on to suggest that if the forum would continue to develop, it could eventually expand "not only to the entire East Asia, but also to the Southeast and Southwest Asia." Song did not provide much more in the way of detail about the new body, which makes it difficult to assess the idea at this stage. But it is hardly the first new body that has been proposed by Asian states to deal with peace and security, including maritime security, where, as Song noted, there are a whole range of issues to contend with including piracy, maritime pollution, freedom of navigation, and fisheries. To take just one example, back in 2015, for instance, there was talk coming out of Japan about a new grouping called the Asia Maritime Organization for Security and Cooperation (See: "Does Asia Need a New Maritime Security Organization?"). Song's proposal is notable when seen in the context of Seoul's increased willingness to contribute to regional security issues, particularly amid concerns that it can at times be too myopically focused on the North Korea threat. The new administration under President Moon Jae-in has certainly been emphasizing Seoul's efforts in this realm, including not just

its peacemaking role beginning with the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics next month but also other efforts such as boosting ASEAN-South Korea relations, which Song also touched on in his remarks (See: “Should North Korea Be Kicked Out of the ASEAN Regional Forum?”). But, like previous proposals of its ilk, Seoul’s proposal also raises several familiar questions. The need for yet another new institution is itself a debatable proposition, given the alphabet soup of organizations already in existence in the Asia-Pacific – including on maritime security – as well as concerns that it might raise about diluting ASEAN’s much-prized centrality in the regional architecture (though some still argue that it is exactly the slow pace of ASEAN-led regionalism that demands new groupings, especially in the security realm).

The biggest question, though, is to what extent such bodies can actually help manage disputes between major powers in Northeast Asia. For a mix of reasons including history, outstanding disputes, and geopolitical competition, relationships in Northeast Asia have not been conducive to the kind of multilateralism we have seen in Southeast Asia, which helps explain how ASEAN arrived at its centrality by default. Of course, dialogues are important to build confidence and provide a common set of understandings for all actors, and other measures like hotlines can be useful to manage tensions when crises break out. But the fundamental challenge in Northeast Asia is not the absence of groupings or dialogues, but managing old disputes and tensions in a fast-changing context, including a bolder and more assertive China and a nuclear North Korea.

Of course, one should not rule out the possibility that new forums or mechanisms like the one Song proposed could play some kind of a role, however small, in helping better manage these tensions. More broadly, as Song suggested in his speech, the Moon administration may want to initially test the extent to which it can go beyond just keeping the peace and try to help making the peace as well (Song used the word “peace” 21 times in his speech, which lasted around 17 minutes). At the same time, given the dynamics at play in Northeast Asia and past efforts at such peacemaking, there are no shortage of reasons to be skeptical about the degree to which any progress would contribute to actually changing the more fundamental geopolitical realities in the region.

Source: thediplomat.com, 29 January 2018

US to work with Indonesia on maritime security, counter-terrorism

The United States wants to work with Indonesia, as the maritime fulcrum of the Indo-Pacific, to ensure that the rule of law and freedom of navigation is upheld in the region, said US Defence Secretary James Mattis in Jakarta on Tuesday (Jan 23). "The maritime fulcrum of the Indo-Pacific area is critical and as we can help in maintaining the maritime domain awareness in the South China Sea, the North Natuna Sea, this is something that we look forward to do," said Mr Mattis. The former commander of the US Central Command was speaking to reporters in Jakarta after a meeting with his Indonesian counterpart Ryamizard Ryacudu, a fellow four-star general. He added that Asean, which Indonesia is a founding member of, remains central to peace in the region and the US shares its desire for all nations to prosper "regardless of the size of the nations". Mr Mattis also acknowledged Indonesia's efforts in fighting extremism, saying the country has "done a very good job (on counter-terrorism) over the last ten years. We know we can learn a lot from them and we must work together on this larger problem". He said that US support for those efforts will now include Special Forces units that conduct counter-terrorism.

Mr Mattis is in Jakarta as part of a week-long tour of South-east Asia, which also includes a stop in Vietnam, just days ahead of the 50th anniversary of the launch of the Tet Offensive - one of the largest military campaigns of the Vietnam War - in January 1968. He told reporters earlier on the flight from Washington to Jakarta, that maritime security cooperation in view of China's territorial claims in the South China Sea, will be among the issues he hopes to discuss in Hanoi. "I need to hear more about how they see things developing as they maintain sovereignty over their territorial waters and economic zone that they maintain oversight of," he said. "Obviously, we want to know what level of engagement they want with us. Is it professional military education, is it joint training? I want to sit down and just talk with them, get a better sense of the pragmatic steps that we can take as we move the relationship forward into one of trust and collaboration." His visit to South-east Asia is in line with a key focus of a broad national security strategy unveiled last Friday in Washington which centres on building partnerships and strengthening alliances.

Indonesia has clashed with China over fishing rights around the Natuna Islands, detaining Chinese fishermen and expanding its military presence in the area in recent years. In July, Indonesia renamed the northern reaches of its exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea as the North Natuna Sea, a move seen as a significant act of resistance to China's territorial ambitions in the South China Sea. Vietnam on the other hand has emerged as one of the most vocal opponents of China's expansive

territorial claims in the South China Sea, where more than US\$3 trillion (S\$4 trillion) in cargo passes every year, reported Reuters. Mr Ryamizard said apart from security in the South China Sea, he and Mr Mattis also discussed North Korea, the Rohingya crisis, and militants in southern Philippines with ties to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). He also welcomed Mr Mattis' offer of assistance in counter-terrorism, saying: "America's tools are much more sophisticated, we need the help."

Source: straitstimes.com, 23 January 2018

Maritime security utmost important for India, Seychelles: S. Jaishankar

Foreign Secretary of India S. Jaishankar on Saturday reiterated that maritime security was of utmost importance for India and Seychelles and that there should be constant cooperation and collective action to tackle such challenges affecting the maritime borders of both the countries. In a statement, Foreign Secretary Jaishankar said, "Relations with countries in the Indian Ocean Region and nurturing a climate of peace and stability are important cornerstones of India's foreign policy. Our vision for the region is based on cooperation and collective action to tackle maritime security challenges." He also praised Narendra Modi's vision of ensuring maritime security from external matters. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his landmark visit to the region in March 2015 clearly articulated our Indian Ocean doctrine. In his words, and I quote, "Our goal is to seek a climate of trust and transparency; respect for international maritime rules and norms by all countries; sensitivity to each other's interests; peaceful resolution of maritime issues; an increase in maritime cooperation. We seek a future for Indian Ocean that lives up to the name of 'SAGAR' - Security And Growth for All in the Region". SAGAR in Hindi means the Ocean. This SAGAR doctrine succinctly outlines our vision for the region with collaboration as its backbone," Foreign Secretary Jaishankar added in the statement. The Foreign Secretary maintained that India and Seychelles agreed to cooperate on defence and security, that is vital for ensuring the security of the maritime borders in both the countries.

"It is in pursuance of this approach that India and Seychelles have over the years built an elaborate architecture of defence and security cooperation. As two maritime neighbours, we have a stake in each other's security and safety. Seychelles with its Exclusive Economic Zone spread over 1.3 million square kilometres is particularly vulnerable," Foreign Secretary Jaishankar continued. Adding, "Recognising this, India and Seychelles have drawn up a cooperation agenda that covers within its purview joint efforts in anti-piracy operations, and enhanced EEZ surveillance and monitoring

to prevent intrusions by potential economic offenders indulging in illegal fishing, poaching, drug and human trafficking." "The cooperation is further exemplified by the operationalisation of the Coastal Surveillance Radar System in March 2016, and our commitment to augment Seychelles' defence assets and capability. We are proud of the role played by Patrol Ships Topaz, Constant and Hermes and the Dornier Aircraft in securing the resource-rich waters of Seychelles. In recognition of our strategic convergence in the Indian Ocean region, the Agreement that we sign today is an incremental step forward in further deepening our cooperation in the spirit of our unique bilateral ties," he explained.

The Foreign Secretary was optimistic that relation between India and Seychelles have been warm and friendly since Seychelles' independence and added the relations have become more cordial and harmonious over the last few years. "Indeed, we are proud of our close bond of friendship with the Republic of Seychelles that has stood the test of time. We embarked on the journey together when Seychelles was born as a sovereign nation four decades ago." "On June 29 1976, when Seychelles celebrated its independence, India was there with a large contingent onboard a naval ship to partake in your celebrations and heartily welcome Seychelles into the comity of sovereign nations. Our traditional linkages have now culminated into a mutually beneficial relationship based on shared values and commitment to the ideals of democracy and development." Foreign Secretary Jaishankar continued that India will remain committed to the development needs of Seychelles and that all challenges would be addressed collectively. He said, "India is committed to further expanding its development partnership with Seychelles. We will be happy to collaborate with the Government of Seychelles in implementing your priority projects through a mix of grants and Lines of Credit."

Adding, "We in India greatly value our bilateral engagement with Seychelles. We have withstood several global challenges together, ranging from the threat of climate change to the piracy menace. Notwithstanding the turbulent waters, our partnership has had a smooth sailing. This reinforces our commitment to not only further deepen India-Seychelles relations but also take our partnership to the next level." Earlier, India and Seychelles signed a revised agreement on the Development, Management, Operation and Maintenance of Facilities, that will allow India to build military infrastructure on Assumption Island at Seychelles, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Office in Victoria on Saturday. The agreement was signed by Foreign Secretary Jaishankar and Seychelles President Danny Faure. The original agreement was signed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and then Seychelles President James Michel. But,

it was not ratified by the Seychelles Parliament, leading to delays. In August last year, Faure stated that the agreement had some "issues" and it would have to be re-negotiated again. Foreign Secretary Jaishankar flew into Seychelles in October and started the re-negotiations over the original agreement. Some amendments were proposed and the Seychelles Parliament had ratified it ultimately, after Faure had consulted with the opposition parties and his cabinet on January 22. In 2015, Prime Minister Modi made a visit to the island nation after 34 years. Former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi earlier visited Seychelles back in 1981.

Source : business-standard.com, 27 January 2018.

Maritime security without a blueprint

India has done well to host the 25th commemorative India-Asean summit in New Delhi to indicate to the 10 Asean countries, and the bloc as a whole, how much it values its relationships with them across sectors and encompassing a wide range of political concerns. The most important of these were flagged as the fight against extremism — on which subject New Delhi is to host a global conference — and on maritime security. The latter in recent years has come to trouble the Asean nations as well as Japan, the East Asian economic powerhouse, as well as the United States. The reason is maritime muscle-flexing by China in order to claim practically 90 per cent of the South China Sea on account of the mineral wealth and fishing grounds these waters contain, and islands in the East China Sea it has belligerently disputed with Japan.

In addition, China has converted reefs in these waters as naval and Air Force facilities, creating anxieties among the small Asean states which can't hope to match China's militaristic approach and also concern in the US. But it is far from clear how far India is prepared to go in sharing burdens for maritime security in these sea lanes. Does it have the will? Does it have the resources?

Much would also depend on how far the Asean nations are ready to give the impression to China that they are keen to gang up on it in the company of India and possibly the US. After all, China, to them, is a much closer neighbour in geographical terms. It will certainly be hard to prepare a blueprint for maritime security at this stage. Remember, India, politically, is not even ready so far to participate in joint naval patrols along with the US in the South China Sea, as it informed the Americans not long ago. In these circumstances, it appears to have been inadvisable for Prime Minister Narendra Modi

to write an Oped article, which appeared in newspapers in all the languages of all the 10 Asean nations. The language and content taunted China when it was suggested in the piece that India's relationship with Asean was free of "contests and claims". Was such an observation called for under the signature of the PM? Aside from the commemorative summit itself held a day before Republic Day, New Delhi might have left many wondering as to the prudence in treating all the visiting 10 heads of government or State as R-Day chief guests. The idea is a contradiction in terms and devalues all. It leaves the impression of crowd diplomacy of uncertain purpose, and converting a high occasion into an event management exercise. Traditionally, for 68 years, India has invited as chief guest the leader of a country with which it conspicuously wishes to flag its relationship.

Source: deccanchronicle.com, 28 January 2018

ADECS 2018: Indonesian Coast Guard is in growth mode

Founded in 2014, the Indonesian Coast Guard (BAKAMLA) is a relatively young institution. Despite its tender age, though, it has great ambitions for growth so it can fulfil its assigned tasks of securing and enforcing the law in Indonesian waters. First Adm Rahmat Eko Rahardjo, director of maritime operations for the Indonesian Coast Guard, spoke to Shephard at the ADECS 2018 conference in Singapore on 30 January. The coast guard is 'currently in the process of building its operational capability both in terms of infrastructure and human resources,' Rahardjo said. The BAKAMLA presently has some 30 patrol vessels, including the newest, a 110m patrol boat. On 18 January, the coast guard received this vessel, KN Tanjung Datu, and it will begin operating this year. The addition of this 2,400t vessel alone is expected to double the ability of the BAKAMLA and the government to combat transnational crime in the border area. Also expected to enter service in 2018 are three new 80m patrol boats and two fast boats.

For operations, however, the coast guard can also request patrol boats from other agencies such as the navy, marine police, fisheries, customs or Ministry of Transport to act as 'force multipliers'. The BAKAMLA has about 1,000 personnel on its roster, but it aims to reach 2,500 within a few years as new vessels come on stream. Rahardjo said the BAKAMLA 'was established in order to synergise all maritime security and safety patrols in Indonesia under a single command in order to make maritime security and safety in Indonesian waters and its jurisdiction more effective and

efficient'. To ensure maritime security and safety within the Indonesian archipelago, as well as strengthen the nation's identity as a maritime country, the BAKAMLA's missions include: conducting patrols in Indonesian waters, formulating related national policy, organising an early-warning system, enforcing the law against illegal activities, monitoring the implementation of maritime patrols by other agencies, assisting other relevant agencies, providing search and rescue assistance and performing any other national defence tasks. The Indonesian Coast Guard is thus invested with the power to conduct hot pursuit, stop and seize vessels violating laws or regulations, and to integrate a national information system.

Things are not easy for the fledgling agency, however, as it must monitor the world's largest archipelagic state comprising some 17,500 islands and an 81,000km-long coastline. Rahardjo specifically listed the following challenges: a vast area of operations, a lack of operational assets, the interoperability of a maritime surveillance system is still in process, and human resources are still lacking in quantity and experience. The director of maritime operations added, 'Synergy for maritime security is still not maximal with the relevant stakeholders. The BAKAMLA is still looking for a new formula to synergise all maritime security and safety patrols in Indonesia.' Rahardjo admitted, 'With the BAKAMLA's current operational resources, it is not enough to cope with the challenges of maritime security issues at the border area.' However, the government is making 'every effort to suppress illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing by foreign fishing vessels in the border areas'. The BAKAMLA is a civil agency, compared to the Indonesian Navy, and its mandate is to enforce the law at sea. Nevertheless, the TNI-AL 'strongly supports' the coast guard, including with human resources and operational support. Indeed, Rahardjo is himself a naval officer, and he and several other high-ranking and mid-ranking officers were assigned to the coast guard to support it. He stated, 'In the implementation of these duties, the coordination between the two institutions is very good, which can be seen in the support provided by the navy to the BAKAMLA.' In conclusion, Rahardjo noted, 'Although the BAKAMLA is a new agency, we were formed to support the president's vision for making Indonesia a 'world maritime fulcrum'. As a new agency, the BAKAMLA still needs a lot of improvements, especially in terms of operational capabilities.' However, he professed a belief that attending ADECS 2018 would help the coast guard gather information regarding marine and naval technology as well as surveillance technology.

Source: shephardmedia.com, 30 January 2018



Russian Navy “Exercise” Sure Looks Like a Submarine on Fire

- Kyle Mizokami

Video of what the Russian government claims is merely an “exercise” appears to show a submarine on fire. The video, shot in the Russian far eastern city of Vladivostok, shows a large fire and thick, black smoke close to several moored Russian Navy submarines. The Russian government says the fire was part of a planned exercise, but the fire and smoke look way too close to the submarines for comfort. The video emerged yesterday on Twitter. According to Russia’s Pacific Fleet, the incident was part of “damage control exercises.” The video shows five submarines tied up at Vladivostok, with a raging fire close to the stern of one.

The submarine involved appears to be a *Kilo*-class diesel electric attack submarine. The Kilos dates back to the early 1980s, and has been the main Soviet/Russian non-nuclear submarine since then. Russia’s Pacific Fleet operates six Kilos and Improved Kilos, although it is unclear which submarine this is. The Russian Navy has used Kilo submarines based in the Black Sea to launch cruise missiles against targets in Syria.

In addition to Russia the submarines are operated by a number of countries, including India, Iran, Vietnam, and China. In 2013, the Indian submarine *INS Sindhurakshak* caught fire and sank portside in Mumbai. A fire in the forward weapons bay triggered explosions of torpedoes and cruise missile warheads in the fully stocked bay. The accident killed eighteen sailors and rendered the ship unrecoverable, and it was finally stricken from Indian Navy rolls in 2017.

The incident has gone quiet on the Internet in the last eighteen hours and is still a mystery. The large, raging fire is clearly too close to the submarine for comfort, and while it may not be directly on the boat the submarine itself is clearly in danger. If the incident began as an “exercise,” at some point it no longer was one and became a fire emergency.

Source: www.popularmechanics.com, 31 January 2018

China to Deploy Nuclear Submarines at Pakistan's Gwadar Port

New Delhi, Jan 17: In order to keep an eye on Indian Navy's operations, China is planning to deploy a nuclear submarine at Gwadar Port in southwestern Pakistan. China has begun work on infrastructure required to station nuclear submarines at the Gwadar Port, which is being built and financed by Beijing for what it called 'trade purposes'. However, the likely deployment of nuclear submarine vindicates India's long-standing discomfort that the real purpose of China's involvement in Gwadar is strategic more than trade.

With nuclear submarine stationed at Gwadar Port, China will have direct strategic access to the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). This will also allow China to keep close tab on the operations of the Indian Navy. A high-level delegation of Chinese officials recently visited Islamabad and held a meeting with key figures in the Pakistan Navy, to expedite the nuclear submarines base projects, a Zee News report said. Also, it is learnt that China's Navy wing of People's Liberation Army (PLA) is eager to operationalise these bases at the earliest.

The Pakistani Navy is constructing a VLF station for strategic submarine communications. VLF means Very Low Frequency, which is used for shore radio station and provides one-way communication to submarines operating in deep water. China is working with the Pakistani Navy on the civil works. The works related to the construction of 205 antenna tower foundation, underground VLF building and power station is currently underway.

Source: www.india.com, 17 January 2018

Third Scorpene-class submarine to be launched

MUMBAI: Marking a generational shift in submarine operations, the Indian Navy launched the third Scorpene class submarine, Karanj, at the Mazagaon dock in Mumbai on Wednesday. Navy Chief Admiral Sunil Lanba was the chief guest in the event at Mazagon Dock.

The state-of-the-art Scorpene submarine has superior stealth features and the ability to launch crippling attacks with precision. Advanced acoustic silencing techniques, low radiated noise levels and hydro-dynamically optimised shape are some of the features that make it virtually invincible, unmatched by most submarines. Scorpene submarines can undertake a wide range of missions such as anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare, intelligence gathering, mine-laying and area surveillance. The submarine is designed to operate in all theatres, with means provided to ensure interoperability with other components of a Naval Task Force.

Last year, INS Kalvari, the first Scorpene class submarine was commissioned into the Indian Navy, at a ceremony on 14 December, by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Khanderi, the second Scorpene class submarine was launched in January 2017, and is currently undergoing the rigorous phase of sea trials and is also scheduled to be delivered shortly. At a time when the Indian Navy is facing challenges of an aging submarine fleet and strong presence of Chinese navy in the Indian Ocean, the Scorpene submarines are a huge boost to the Navy's combat system. In October 2005, the Scorpene deal was signed for India and the first submarine was due to be delivered by 2012.

Source: www.ndtv.com, 31 January 2018

India moves to set up overseas military base in Seychelles

- Rahul Bedi

India is to establish its first overseas military base on the Seychelles archipelago, considerably strengthening its naval presence in the Indian Ocean to counter growing Chinese hegemony in the strategically critical region. India's foreign secretary Subramaniam Jaishankar and the Seychelles secretary of state Barry Faure signed an agreement at the weekend in the island republic's capital Victoria, approving an Indian navy base and air strip on Assumption Island. "This [agreement] reinforces our commitment to not only further deepen India-Seychelles relations but also take our partnership to another level," Mr Jaishankar said in a statement after signing the agreement. Diplomatic and naval officials said the treaty agreement was a revised version of an earlier one signed by prime minister Narendra Modi during his Seychelles visit in March 2015. The earlier agreement, however, failed to secure

ratification by the Seychelles parliament amid concern over its legality. “It [the new agreement] is a significant measure by India to secure a firmer presence in the vital Indian Ocean region,” said former Indian navy chief of staff Admiral Arun Prakash. The Indian navy can now monitor vital sea lanes, he added.

India had already provided Seychelles with a maritime reconnaissance aircraft, two helicopters and a coast guard intercept boat. It also installed a coastal surveillance radar system on one of Seychelles’ many islands to gather intelligence. Periodically, Indian warships travel to Seychelles to conduct anti-piracy patrols. Senior naval officers said the projected base was aimed at offsetting China’s maritime Silk Road strategy, which includes a network of financial, military and political alliances between Beijing and Indian Ocean states, including Seychelles. India fears encirclement by an increasingly militarist China under this strategy, which it also refers to as the “string of pearls” initiative. Under this, China has secured diplomatic, military, commercial and strategic arrangements with countries such as Bangladesh, Maldives, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, among others, a development that India believes could lead to its isolation. India is presently in the process of negotiating a “quadrilateral” arrangement with the US, Japan and Australia to counter China. The nuclear-armed neighbours fought a war in 1962 over an unresolved border dispute, in which India came off worse. Military face-offs occur frequently between their respective armies along their 4,057km long mountainous disputed line of actual control, periodically raising tensions.

Source: www.irishtimes.com, 30 January 2018

China needs more nuclear warheads to deter US threat, military says

- Minnie Chan

China must expand its nuclear stockpile so it can better deter and hit back at an enemy strike as geopolitical uncertainties mount and the US appears bent on a nuclear build-up, according to the Chinese military’s mouthpiece. In the *PLA Daily* on Tuesday, a commentary said China had enough nuclear weapons to prevent “bullying” by other nuclear powers but still needed to respond to changes in US strategy. “To enhance China’s strategic counterbalance in the region and maintain China’s status as a great power, and protect national security, China has to beef up and develop a reliable nuclear deterrence capability,” it said.

It also said China would still stick to the “no first use” doctrine, meaning there were no circumstances in which it would be the first to use nuclear weapons. The commentary comes as the administration of US President Donald Trump is expected to unveil its new military weapons policy later this week. A leaked draft of the document says Washington will ramp up new nuclear projects and deploy more “low yield” nuclear bombs, according to the Huffington Post. Military analysts said China was poised to increase its own arsenal of nuclear warheads but there were no plans to rival the United States. Beijing-based military analyst Zhou Chenming said China only needed to add about 100 warheads to its stockpile to counter threats from the US and India. “Nuclear weapons are hugely expensive to maintain and China is very pragmatic. Beijing will not spend too much money on an arms race,” Zhou said. China has never declared the scale of its nuclear stockpile but the Washington-based Arms Control Association puts the country’s total at 270 warheads, the fourth-biggest of the five main nuclear states. Russia has 7,000, the US 6,800, France 300 and Britain 215, the association estimates.

Song Zhongping, a former member of the People’s Liberation Army’s Second Artillery Corps, the predecessor to the PLA Rocket Force, said China needed to have several hundred nuclear warheads deployed at all times. “[But] it does not need as many as its US and Russian counterparts,” Song said. “China can assemble many nuclear weapons in a short time if there is a war. The PLA’s ultimate goal is to strengthen the effectiveness of its nuclear counterstrike power.” The US and Russia have reversed decades of non-proliferation efforts to modernise and possibly expand their nuclear weapons arsenals. The US is developing at least six new-generation nuclear weapons, including various missiles, the B-21 Raider long-range stealth strategic bomber to deliver conventional or thermonuclear weapons, and a more advance nuclear submarine. Russian Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu said earlier this month that the bulk of his country’s nuclear arms should be upgraded over the next few years, according to Russia’s Tass news agency. Song and Zhou said China was also working on upgrades to its nuclear technology, including efforts to turn single-warhead missile launchers into multi-warhead ones, and to integrate land, sea and air-launched missile systems. “China has developed many kinds of conventional warhead missiles, from short range to long range, which all can be turned into very powerful nuclear weapons,” Song said. Zhou said China’s new “hypersonic glide vehicle”, known as the DF-17, could also be equipped with nuclear warheads. The DF-17 is expected to not only challenge US defences but also be able to more accurately hit military targets in Japan and India. At the end of the cold war, the US had more than 10,000 nuclear warheads deployed, while the former Soviet Union had about 40,000. But Washington

and Moscow both agreed to cut their arsenals under the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty.

Source: www.scmp.com, 30 January 2018

PLA Navy deploys 'new type of electronic warfare aircraft'

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy's South China Sea Fleet deployed a "new type of electronic warfare aircraft" in its recent combat maneuvers, a move to greatly enhance the navy's capabilities in modern warfare to safeguard the country's sea rights, said Chinese military experts.

The new aircraft is the H-6G bomber developed for 10 years with the Electronic Countermeasures (ECM) pods being equipped underneath its wings. It was the first time the bomber played "a supporting role in the electronic warfare," according to Military Time, a China Central Television CCTV military program on Saturday. The modified H-6G fitted with ECM pods can engage in combat missions using electronic jamming, suppression, and anti-radiation, the program said. "The main role of the electronic fighters is to obstruct the enemies' electronic jamming devices - for example, radar, to temporarily or permanently, if powerful enough, cover the surveillance devices and to hide our combat platforms' track," Song Zhongping, a military expert and TV commentator, told the Global Times. Song added that "the H-6G electronic warfare aircraft boasts of high electronic jamming power and can cover relatively bigger combat areas such as the South China Sea and East China Sea."

China has developed advanced and standardized ECM pods to modify multiple types of fighter jets for such combat requirements, such as the J-15 type fighter jets. Using the ECM pods in fighters is the most efficient and effective way, Song noted.

China's JH-7 fighter bomber was also seen carrying such ECM pods in previous PLA Air Force military practices, according to CCTV. China's PLA Navy deploys such EMC pods carrying aircraft together with its warships and other combat vessels for electronic combat missions and to enhance combat capabilities, Song said.

Source: www.globaltimes.cn, 21 January 2018

India develops 800 km range BrahMos missile

NEW DELHI, Jan. 20 (Xinhua) -- India, along with Russia, is developing a BrahMos supersonic cruise missile with a strike range of 800 km, defense sources said Saturday. "The missile range was increased from 290 km to 450 km last year and now it is being raised to 800 km. The testfiring of the missile is likely to take place by this yearend only," sources said. The land and sea variants of BrahMos missile are already operational with the Indian Army and the Indian Navy. In November last year, India successfully testfired the air version. India on Thursday testfired nuclear-capable, surface-to-surface Agni V ballistic missile. Agni V is the most advanced missile in Agni series with a strike range of over 5,000 km.

Source: www.xinhuanet.com, 20 January 2018

Africa's dilemma in registration of shipping lines

Tanzania's President John Magufuli caused heads to roll a few days ago by temporarily closing the country's ship registry and ordering a review of 470 ships that fly the Dar flag. Two ships had just been arrested in the international waters. On January 8, Tanzania-flagged Andromeda was allegedly found with a load of explosives on its way to Libya. Days earlier, Zanzibar-registered oil tanker Kaluba was intercepted off the Dominican Republic, reportedly with 1,570kg of cocaine in its hold. Somehow, Dr Magufuli had to send out an unequivocal message to vessels "that tarnish the name of our country". In a continent where investors dangling loads of hard currencies are used to being handled with kid gloves, there are some people who would see such a policy move as rather un-African.

But to the maritime world, the action came as a no surprise. While the arrest of ships flying its flags has not been as frequent as the DRC-registered ones, Tanzania has for some time been on the spot. Its ships, especially the Zanzibar-registered ones, have been in the news for all the wrong reasons including allegation of violating UN sanctions on Iraq and North Korea. Here is the general dilemma for Africa. Owning and operating a ship is a an expensive affair that the continent's private sector has avoided like the plague. Apart from Ethiopia's State-owned merchant ships, majority of Eastern Africa including Kenya that receives one million containers every year do not own merchant ships. Africa's claim on ships that ply its waters is normally limited to collection of registration fees, a formality that confers to a foreign ship the same artificial citizenship that local incorporation hands a multinational firm on the continent.

On paper, an ocean-going vessel which chooses to be registered in a country other than that of its true owner effectively commits to observe all the laws and international conventions of the country. Through its Merchant Shipping Act 2009, Kenya has been addressing these weaknesses despite slow implementation.

Source: businessdailyafrica.com, 20 January 2018

Intelligent shipping enabled through new solutions

Transas has unveiled an advanced suite of tools and services that are housed on its unified cloud-based platform to assist shipowners, seafarers and vessel traffic managers co-operate and improve safety. Its A-Suite has multiple online solutions on the THESIS cloud that provide intelligence to the full breadth of the maritime ecosystem to reduce human error and improve efficiency. It uses artificial intelligence-based technology to provide information, advice and support to seafarers and vessel managers. A-Suite uses the latest in machine learning techniques to reduce the potential for human miscalculations on the bridge or poor decisions elsewhere in the vessel operational chain.

“We want to help the industry improve by enabling it to make better decisions and boost competitive advantage, using machine intelligence to augment the human in the loop,” said Transas chief executive Frank Coles. A-Suite will be available to bridge teams, fleet managers, ship operators and personnel managing vessel traffic services. It will also be available to people running shore-based fleet operational centres and training facilities, which would enable them to participate in real-time decision support and post-voyage analysis. In its initial version, the package will comprise of three core modules – advanced intelligent manoeuvring (AIM), advanced intelligent diagnostics (AID), and advanced intelligent routing (AIR). These services will become fully operational over the coming months. These will deliver track prediction, anti-collision support and situational awareness tools, voyage planning and optimisation and post-voyage analysis, supported by advanced data delivery, remote training and maintenance services.

Source: marinemec.com, 30 January 2018

False declaration persists at ports

Despite the establishment of Pre-Arrival Assessment Report (PAAR) and Automated System for Customs Data plus, plus (ASYCUDA++) designed to facilitate trade and block revenue loss at the ports and borders, one of the biggest challenges facing Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) is lack of compliance by importers and agents. Non-compliance, according to Customs Comptroller General, Col Hameed Ali (rtd),

has become the biggest problem facing the service at the ports as customs and agents are exploiting the loopholes in the platforms to defraud the government. It was learnt that PAAR, a cargo clearance platform established by NCS to enhance effective clearance procedure of imported goods within the shortest time at Nigerian ports, had been deterring the smooth flow of trade, which it ought to promote. According to a report by Lagos Chambers of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) on PAAR, the persistent delays in clearance of cargo at the Lagos ports had become a major cause for concern for the business community.

The chamber said that PAAR, managed by the Nigeria Customs, had been burdened with capacity challenges. It noted: “The PAAR, which was originally programmed to be issued within six hours now takes over a week in most cases before it is released. Without the issuance of PAAR, other cargo clearance procedures cannot progress.”

Counterfeiting

Ali noted that there was high rate of falsified documents at the ports, under-invoicing and false declaration, adding that clearing agents were culprits of these illicit acts. The comptroller general revealed that less than five per cent of importers processed their clearing documents genuinely. Ali said: “Out of 100 containers imported into the country, there is hardly 10 containers with genuine declaration. For any one Indian that is there, 10 Nigerians must support him because we do not love our own country. “You cannot go to their country and do this, but in Nigeria, anybody can come and cheat us.”

Fast track abuse

He said that many of the goods cleared at the ports through fast-tracking arrangement were causing security risk to the country and its economy. Ali said that more than 36 containerised cargoes were missing at the nation’s seaports over abuse of its fast track scheme. He disclosed during an interactive evening session of the 45th Annual General Meeting of the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) in Lagos, that NCS had created a platform to ensure that all impediments to businesses in Nigeria were removed. He said: “I can tell you categorically that less than five per cent of our importers processed their documents genuinely at the ports currently we have discovered this through our investigations.”

Security risk

For instance, he explained that the recent 1,100 pump action guns seized at the port showed wash hand basins in its Form M document until 100 per cent physical examination revealed there were ammunitions in the consignment. In 2017 alone, the service's anti-smuggling unit, Federal Operations Unit, Zone A, Lunit, arrested 179 smugglers and recovered N5.95billion from unscrupulous agents and importers. Customs' Comptroller, Mohammed Uba, said that N1.95billion was realised from duty payments and demand notices on general goods that tried to beat the system through wrong classification of cargoes, transfer of value and shortchange in duty payment at seaports and border stations. He said that smugglers were now using various methods to smuggle contraband to the country. The spokesman of the service Joseph Attah, a deputy comptroller, explained that NCS had been using its PAAR for speedy clearance of goods by importers. He said the Comptroller-General had recently commissioned the renovated and re-equipped PAAR ruling center. Attah said: "This allows importers with proven integrity to take their cargo straight to their premises where examination will be conducted with a view to collecting duty. "We have adopted it and have been using it; meaning that importers and their agents make appropriate declaration, documentation and finalise all processes before the arrival of the cargo." The spokesman said the service would actively partner with the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council, the office that is driving the ease of doing business projects, to ensure that every impediment to businesses in Nigerian ports was removed.

Source: newtelegraphonline.com, 31 January 2018

Making the Climate call count for ports

The world will be watching as the International Maritime Organization sets its goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) from shipping, IMO Secretary General Kitack Lim told member states at the IMO's 30th Assembly session. Shortly afterwards, Lloyd's Register and University Maritime Advisory Services (UMAS) released 'Zero Emissions Vessels 2030', a study aiming to demonstrate the viability of zero emissions vessels (ZEVs) and identify what needs to be in place to make them a competitive solution. The IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee is due to adopt its initial GHG strategy in April. In the run-up to this significant date, much has

been written, and said, about shipping's responsibility to reduce emissions and the technology that will drive results – but where do ports come into the picture? And, given that the onus will be on ports to deliver the associated infrastructure, should they have more influence in the debate? “Ports need to be at the table to ensure that their interests are being met, as well as to offer their counsel on strategic approaches,” says IMO maritime ambassador Carleen Lyden-Walker. “Ports and ships are inextricably linked – the greater the collaboration to meet common goals, the greater chance of success.” Ms Lyden-Walker, who is co-founder and executive director of the North American Marine Environment Protection Association (NAMEPA), says: “Through technology, shipping could be at zero emissions by 2035, but not fully decarbonised. A combination of many approaches – scrubbers, LNG, battery, nuclear fusion – will be utilised to achieve this. It will be important for ports to provide the infrastructure to support these endeavours – waste reception facilities for scrubber ash, LNG bunkering availability and charging stations will be needed to make this practicable.” Should ports prefer not to get involved in the practicalities, they could create a commercial entity that could develop these capabilities, she suggests.

Bridging the gap

Describing herself as "a great believer in bridging the gap that exists between ships and ports", Ms Lyden-Walker cites examples of port environmental and other managers having little understanding of environmental regulations as they affect shipping. “Ports must, indeed, be at the table – but they must ensure their representatives are educated about shipping and its operational challenges,” she says. “By the same token, shipping needs to recognise that the port is the community face of our industry, so a broader level of understanding of the shared responsibility, and opportunity for collaboration, is important.”

A factor that needs to be remembered is that not all ships trade in the same way and hence there are differing needs in ports, says Ms Lyden-Walker. “For instance, cold ironing (onshore power) and LNG are only practical for ships that trade from Port A to Port B on a regular, scheduled route. That way, investment in infrastructure to either plug into shore power or invest in LNG bunkering facilities makes sense. “Most ships, though, do not run such regular routes. In this instance, facilitating reduced emissions by supporting the operational aspects of such a goal – waste reception facilities, charging stations, etc. – will help greatly to achieve the objective of reduced emissions.”

Green options

In January 2017, the Port of London Authority became the first UK port to introduce a 'green tariff', offering a 5% discount on port charges for vessels with an Environmental Shipping Index (ESI) score of 30 or above. At the end of the year, the PLA published its draft Air Quality Strategy, the result of research, consultation and the first ever port-wide emissions inventory for the tidal Thames. Part of the PLA's Thames Vision, the strategy aims to reduce emissions from marine sources while supporting the increased use of the river for passenger and freight movements. There are 19 proposals, including exploring onshore power, trialling new emissions-reducing technology with Thames Clippers through retrofitting engines, and running an 'Expo' to share emerging best practice with Thames operators. A five-year action plan from 2018 to 2022 includes continued research. "We are taking the lead in this," says PLA chief executive Robin Mortimer. "There are two ways of driving emissions reductions. There is the regulatory approach, and there is a place for that with IMO, EU and UK standards, and there are market-based solutions – using the power of being in the supply chain or as a consumer to drive behaviour. "Ports have a role to play in both – in influencing the regulatory situation, where we are keen to make sure there is a level playing field and some ports are not disadvantaged, and in our more direct role as a key part of the supply chain. Our green tariff was the first step in this. "In isolation, perhaps it isn't going to achieve very much – but if enough ports around the world have incentives for greener shipping, it will provide the impetus for shipping lines to invest faster and turn over their older fleets faster, because you are changing the economics."

Air quality

There is a particular onus on the PLA because its operations include the UK's busiest inland waterway and the capital city's overall air quality problems are a big political issue. The PLA's Air Quality Strategy includes a mix of measures, says Mr Mortimer, and further studies are a vital part of that. "The big issue for us is inland waterway vessels. There isn't really an evidence base to take simple regulatory action such as an emissions charging scheme, because we don't know yet what is technically possible. So, we will do follow-up work to look at the most cost-effective solutions to emissions abatement." The Thames Clippers trial is set to be extended to establish whether the technology can be introduced on every type of vessel and what the cost would be. "Once we have that data, we will be talking to the GLA and others about how we make that happen."

“If we know that we can reduce NOX emissions by 50% on every vessel at a specific average cost, we can start to think about a combination of regulatory and incentive measures – possibly even a fund to support installation of this technology.” However, the PLA must be wary of rushing ahead, he emphasises. “What we don’t want is a system which penalises water transport, which is in many ways much better and has less impact on air quality – because it is in the middle of the river, and also from the carbon perspective and because it reduces road congestion. We don’t want a draconian regime which makes it impossible to operate because the limits set are too low compared with what is achievable.” Ports do need to be involved in the industry’s efforts to reduce emissions from shipping, says Mr Mortimer. However, he adds: “For a move towards LNG, for example, there is an assumption that the infrastructure will be provided and that someone will find it commercially viable to provide it – and I think that is broadly right. If there is a shift in technology, there is no doubt it will become commercially attractive to step into the market. “For the PLA, we need to know the facts and we need to proceed in a measured way. There is a lot of information yet to be gathered on what technology is going to make the most difference from the inland waterways point of view.”

Roll Out Of Sustainability Programme

The new World Ports Sustainability Programme (WPSP) will be launched at an international conference in Antwerp, March 22-23. The initiative extends the scope of the International Association of Ports and Harbors (IAPH) World Ports Climate Initiative beyond climate action, to include future-proof infrastructure, climate and energy, societal integration, safety and security and governance and ethics. Initiated by the IAPH and based on the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, the WPSP aims to coordinate sustainability efforts by ports. Meanwhile, ports continue to announce their own measures. The Norwegian port of Ålesund is offering a 30% discount on harbour dues for cruise ships that have a score of 50 or more points on the Environmental Ship Index (ESI) from the start of 2018. The Panama Canal has launched its own emissions calculator, to enable shippers to assess their carbon emissions, rank those which have reduced most emissions by transiting the canal versus alternative routes, and encourage action to reduce their carbon footprint. The Port of Antwerp is investing €1.4m over the next three years in a series of projects to make port-generated freight traffic smoother and more efficient, aiming to reduce truck journeys by up to 250,000 a year. The projects include new rail and barge services, and avoiding empty truck trips by finding return loads.

The Port of New York and New Jersey has introduced a ban on trucks that are 23 years old or older, from January this year, although this has been criticised by environmentalists because it is far less stringent than an earlier proposal to ban trucks dated 2007 or older. Then in Estonia, the Port of Tallinn is offering a 4% discount on port charges for vessels using LNG as their primary fuel. Tallinn also provides incentives for ships that have invested in scrubbers for reducing sulphur compounds in emissions, and accepts the waste generated by scrubbers without charging additional fees. In October 2017, Tallink moved its cargo ship Sea Wind to operate from Muuga Harbour instead of Tallinn Old City Harbour. “This means that more than 40,000 trucks per year will be removed from the city centre and congestion and pollution in the city will be significantly reduced,” said the port.

Source: portstrategy.com, 30 January 2018

Japan Claims a Stake in Sri Lanka’s Ports

Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono’s visit to Sri Lanka earlier this month was the first by a Japanese foreign minister in 15 years. Governmental confirmation of Sri Lanka’s first liquefied natural gas (LNG) project came during Kono’s visit, when the prime minister’s office revealed that an MoU was to be signed with Japan to build a Floating Storage Regasification Unit (FSRU). The FSRU and LNG terminal project will be a joint venture by the Sri Lanka Ports Authority with both Japan and India. The LNG terminal is to be located within Colombo port – one of the busiest ports in South Asia and an important trans-shipment hub in the region. Japan’s public broadcaster NHK described Kono’s visit as being “part of Japanese government’s plan to promote cooperation for port expansion projects.” The low-profile visit concluded with a tour of Colombo port, and Japanese media did not hesitate to place it in the context of Japan’s concerns over China’s growing maritime footprint in the region. Before the port visit, according to NHK World, Kono told reporters who accompanied his delegation that “China is increasing involvement in port development in Sri Lanka,” and that “projects to build ports and other infrastructure should be open to any country.” The remark flagged Japan’s concerns over China’s major role in Sri Lanka’s infrastructure development, especially the Chinese-built, Chinese-run Hambantota port in the south. Japan’s concept is “to develop free and open maritime order in the Indo-Pacific region as an international public good,” Toshihide Ando, deputy press secretary of Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said at a briefing with a selected group

of local journalists in Colombo. Asked about the status of talks with regard to the eastern port of Trincomalee, the development of which Japan has indicated interest in, he declined to comment.

The increasingly anxious interest shown by Japan and India in investing in Colombo and Trincomalee ports would seem to be related to concerns arising from Sri Lanka's recent finalization of the lease of Hambantota port to a Chinese company that holds a majority stake. The apparent loss of sovereign control over the port, strategically located near major East-West sea lanes, has led to fears that it may become a Chinese military base, in spite of Sri Lanka's assurances to the contrary. "We want to ensure that we develop all our ports, and all these ports are used for commercial activity, transparent activity, and will not be available to anyone for any military activity," Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe was reported as saying in Tokyo last April.

With China being seen as a common enemy, Japan's strategic interests have begun to converge with those of the United States and India, and a closer strategic partnership has evolved among the three. Japan now participates in the Malabar naval drills with the United States and India, and uses the same rhetoric, with terminology like "Indo-Pacific" to refer to the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, blurring the boundaries. Japan has always been generous with aid to Sri Lanka and is a major development partner. During Sri Lanka's war years, Japan was one of the four co-chairs of the peace process; when the Western co-chairs threatened to cut off aid, Japan reassured Sri Lanka that it would not follow suit. Japanese envoys never fail to recall the speech made by Sri Lanka's former president, J. R. Jayewardena, at the San Francisco peace conference in 1951, where Sri Lanka came to Japan's defense. Then-Finance Minister Jayewardene quoted the words of the Buddha, saying "hatred ceases not by hatred but by love," and asked that no reparations be exacted that would harm Japan's economy. "The Japanese still remember that this speech supported Japan's return to the international society after the WWII," Kono said in a written interview with the state-run Daily News ahead of his visit. Against this backdrop, Japan's interest in investing in Sri Lankan ports would normally be seen as a welcome development. But with India a partner in the proposed joint venture, and given the evolving strategic landscape, it would now appear to be embedded in a larger trilateral project of countering Chinese influence. This could mean there is a hidden cost — in that Sri Lanka risks being unnecessarily drawn into a big power conflict if there is an escalation in tensions between China and the United States and/or India.

In tracking Japan's role in shaping the regional security architecture, analyst Brian Kalan's observation two years ago in Southfront would seem relevant. "The only question is how Japan will decide to utilize their naval power in the coming decades," he said. "Will it be used in the pursuit of ensuring their independence and peaceful relations with their regional partners, or in the self-destructive pursuit of U.S. hegemony in the region?"

Source: thediplomat.com, 24 January 2018

This big idea would make Mississippi's 'Blue Economy' even better for the Coast and the state

Some of the smartest investments happen along coastlines — and what better coast to invest in than the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Our Coast has seen its share of natural and man-made disasters, and has used resiliency and determination to come back, stronger than ever. Mississippi's maritime economy — the "Blue Economy" — is already large, perhaps larger than many here in the state and surrounding region appreciate because the economic data is not complete. Best estimates put the overall economic impact of the Coast somewhere between one-third and one-half of the state's gross domestic product. That means that any investment into Mississippi's Blue Economy will ripple throughout the state. There is an opportunity at hand: The world is advancing autonomous technologies on land, in the air, in space and at sea. We recognize that these various technologies will need to coordinate and communicate seamlessly from under the ocean surface, to the air, and to outer space. This is important not only for defense of our soldiers, sailors and homeland, but also for commerce across oceans, recovery from natural and man-made disasters including hurricanes and oil spills, fishing and aquaculture, communications, energy development and environmental monitoring. Last summer, Gov. Phil Bryant challenged his Governor's Ocean Task Force to create a roadmap for the Blue Economy based on high-paying jobs and a highly trained workforce. Seeing the opportunities, the task force recommended a master plan that outlined this roadmap, while also recognizing specific challenges such as the need for more investments in workforce development and education focused on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math

The GOTF Master Plan focused on key areas to leverage: engineering capacity, advanced development, applications, workforce and education, economic

development, and policy and ethics. The plan recommended to Gov. Bryant that he work with state and federal agencies to use public-private partnerships to create a unique maritime technology environment for research, development, evaluation and testing. The list is long and the need is great, but there are precious few places in the United States where such technologies can move from concept in the laboratory to large-scale evaluation in the ocean. Fortunately for us, Mississippi is one of those places. We have major research universities already excelling in research and development of autonomous vehicles in the sea (The University of Southern Mississippi) and in the air (Mississippi State University). We have major companies already invested in unmanned maritime systems, such as Leidos in Long Beach, which will build the 135-foot Sea Hunter II with United States Marine Inc. in Gulfport.

We have interested and highly invested federal partners, including the Naval Oceanographic Office under the Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command at Stennis Space Center in Hancock County. We also have NOAA's National Data Buoy Center (the marine environment data collectors for the nation's coasts and offshore waters) at Stennis and National Marine Fisheries Service in Pascagoula. The Governor's Ocean Task Force Master Plan creates a roadmap whereby these existing strengths are leveraged with our unique coastline in a way that builds new engineering and entrepreneurship capacity. It focuses on partnerships between the educational pathway from high schools to community colleges and research universities. It links industry and manufacturing to research and development. And, it leverages the ability of Mississippi's strong leadership from our local, state and federal representatives to build longstanding, sustainable programs. Our vision is called Ocean Enterprise. The centerpiece is a large research and development center in downtown Gulfport. There is further capacity for advanced development, testing and evaluation in both Hancock and Jackson counties. Ocean Enterprise is more than bricks and mortar. It is a partnership program that allows for private and public investments to be made on critical projects in a way that can supply new technologies to market in months — rather than years — under the current acquisitions process. Ocean Enterprise will also link to a proposed Business Development Fund that will facilitate start-up investment and draw other capital investments into the area.

In short, Ocean Enterprise will change the game for South Mississippi by shifting economic development toward high-end engineering and advanced technology development. Rather than having our best and brightest high school graduates leave the state for other opportunities, we can give them a reason to stay. Places like

Huntsville, Alabama, and Manhattan, Kansas, have built economies driven by similar goals. We can do the same — right here in South Mississippi.

Source: sunherald.com, 28 January 2018

Harnessing ocean resources

The oceans cover about two-thirds of the surface of the Earth and are the very foundations of life. They play a major role in food security, medicine, etc., and are a critical part of the biosphere. They not only provide marine resources but are also the “lungs” of our planet because that is where most of the oxygen we breathe comes from. There are three dimensions to be noted: ecological, social and economic. Human actions however have had a detrimental impact on oceans because of the latter's overexploitation. Bangladesh now has a large maritime area in the Bay of Bengal, especially after legal victories over its two neighbouring countries India and Myanmar. As a maritime nation, Bangladesh aspires to cultivate a Blue Economy based on the marine resources within its maritime boundary. Bangladesh needs a strategic plan and policy to explore those resources without jeopardising the ecological balance of the Bay of Bengal.

The Bay of Bengal is home to migratory species and has ample marine resources. Marine activities, however, have begun to have a detrimental impact on the marine environment and this is of serious concern for many reasons. Scientists, for example, have consistently cautioned about the increasing severity of climate change and incidence of coral bleaching in tropical seas over the past two decades. The ability of reefs to withstand ocean acidification, which could have serious irreversible negative effects on marine organisms, particularly corals, as well as to withstand other pressures, including overfishing and pollution in the oceans, has weakened.

Unfortunately, human pressures, including overexploitation; illegal unregulated fishing; destructive fishing; unsustainable aquaculture practices; marine pollution; habitat destruction; climate change; and ocean acidification are some of the biggest threats for the world's oceans today. The United Nations emphasised upon sustainable ocean governance in the Ocean Conference held on June 5-9, 2017 at the UN headquarters in New York. Sustainable ocean governance has become a priority concern for coastal states all over the world. Almost all coastal countries have

established ocean governance front and centre at the national level. They have adopted marine spatial planning (MSP) to explore and exploit their marine resources sustainably without jeopardising the natural phenomena of the ocean. MSP has emerged as an effective tool for sustainable ocean governance in the modern era. MSP is a public process of analysing and allocating human activities in marine areas based on space/zone to achieve ecological, economic, and social objectives. This is the planning by a coastal state to use marine resources within its maritime boundary—a process that brings multiple users and uses of the ocean including energy, industry, government, conservation and recreation under one umbrella to make informed and coordinated decisions about how to use marine resources sustainably. It integrates conservation, sustainable use of living resources, oil and mineral wealth extraction, bioprospecting (the process of discovery and commercialisation of new products based on biological resources), sustainable energy production and marine transport. It requires demonstrating measurable steps towards critical internationally agreed targets for fisheries, aquaculture, habitat protection and pollution reduction.

MSP is an opportunity through which benefits from blue resources can be reaped with the help of a strategic plan. MSP is more effective than the traditional method/theory of integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) because of its integrated and holistic approach. MSP also highlights the need to address the frontiers of successful integrated approaches that include public-private partners, secure financing and catalysing good ocean governance while reconciling tensions and balancing priorities between (i) growth and conservation, (ii) private sector interests and equitable benefits for communities, and (iii) areas beyond national jurisdiction and exclusive economic zones.

Bangladesh needs a MSP framework for balancing ecological, economic, and social goals that will ensure sustainable development. About 20 coastal countries have already initiated a MSP for sustainable management of their national maritime territory. Unfortunately, Bangladesh, which has acquired a large maritime boundary thanks to two legal victories over India and Myanmar as previously mentioned, is yet to establish ocean governance at the centre of policymaking which is necessary to adopt a national maritime policy and MSP for sustainable ocean governance in the Bay of Bengal. The government of Bangladesh wants to establish a Blue Economy but it must realise that sustainable ocean governance is the sine qua non. This aspiration will remain unfulfilled if effective steps are not taken. The government has established a specialised maritime university—a positive step—which can be the central platform for research on ocean governance which can then contribute towards the formulation of a

national policy for sustainable ocean governance. If we are to attain the benefits of a Blue Economy, we must act now while there's still time.

Source: thedailystar.net, 23 January 2018

WEF Launches Partnerships on Circular Economy, Oceans, Skills Development

The 48th World Economic Forum (WEF 48) Annual Meeting brought together over 3,000 participants from over 100 countries to discuss opportunities for creating a shared future and embracing “our common humanity” in the face of rapid technological change. Leaders made commitments and announcements related to climate change, oceans, the digital divide, sanitation, and gender equality, among others. WEF 48 convened in Davos, Switzerland, from 23-26 January, and included participation from over 340 public figures, including more than 70 heads of state and government and 45 heads of international organizations. The Forum convened under the theme, ‘Creating a Shared Future in a Fractured World,’ with the aim of rededicating “leaders from all walks of life” to improve the state of the world through co-design, co-creation, and collaboration. WEF featured over 400 sessions that contributed to the meeting’s six agendas: the global agenda related to its 14 System Initiatives and efforts to advance major multilateral processes, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); the geopolitical agenda; the economic agenda, which focused on delivering sustainable and inclusive economic development; the regional and national agenda; the industry and business agenda, in preparation for scientific, technological and policy transformations and the Fourth Industrial Revolution; and the future agenda, which focused on sharing ideas, innovations, and discoveries to reshape global systems. WEF focused on driving positive change through 14 System Initiatives meant to shape the future of: consumption; the digital economy; economic progress; education gender and work; energy; natural resource security; financial systems; food security and agriculture; healthcare; information and entertainment; trade and investment; infrastructure and development; and mobility shaping the future of production.

For the first time, WEF featured an all-female panel of seven co-chairs. Norway’s Prime Minister Erna Solberg called for action on gender equality and corruption and illegal financial flows. Chetna Sinha, Founder and Chair of the Mann Deshi

Foundation, urged financial access for everyone and announced a Rupee 100 million alternative investment fund to encourage more women entrepreneurs. On human rights and related to gender, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein underscored the role of the private sector in ending discrimination and ensuring equal opportunities for lesbian, gay, bi, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people in the workplace and beyond.

Leaders also highlighted challenges posed by climate change. In his speech, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi described climate change as one of the three greatest threats to "the survival of human civilization." He called for "resources to help developing countries adopt appropriate technology" to reduce carbon emissions. France's President, Emmanuel Macron, announced that France would close all its coal-fired power stations by 2021 and make climate action one of five pillars in an economic reform plan. Liu He, an official of the Government of China, identified pollution reduction as one of three critical challenges for his country. Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau also discussed climate action, while Thomas Buberl, head of global insurance company AXA, said the corporation would stop insuring coal projects and planned to divest from coal.

On oceans, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, Peter Thomson, and Isabella Lövin, Sweden's Deputy Prime Minister, launched the 'Friends of Ocean Action' partnership with US\$4.5 million in funding from the Benioff Ocean Initiative. The global partnership to save the oceans will bring together 40 ocean leaders and activists to leverage their collective networks and accelerate action towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goal on Oceans (SDG 14).

On tackling pollution and waste, leaders from Alphabet, The Coca-Cola Company, Royal Philips, Unilver and others will partner with the governments of China, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Rwanda and international organizations to form the Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy (PACE). PACE aims to go beyond the 9% of waste that is currently cycled back into the economy by tackling plastics pollution and electronic waste. Chile is partnering with TriCiclos and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation to implement a national plan to move towards a circular economy, making it the second country in the world to implement such a plan. The UN Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development announced its intention to connect the world's 3.8 billion people without internet access by 2025. The Commission set seven targets that focus on expanding broadband infrastructure, internet access and use in support of achieving the SDGs. Targets to "connect the other half" include: ensuring

that 60% of the world's youth and adult population achieve a minimum level of proficiency in sustainable digital skills; reducing by 50% the number of unconnected micro-,small- and medium-sized enterprises; and ensuring the affordability of entry-level broadband services in developing countries, at less than 2% of monthly gross national income per capita (GNI). The WEF addressed a number of other related topics during its sessions, including on big data and artificial intelligence.

Organizations announced many other technology-related initiatives. They included: the WEF initiative, the IT industry Skills Initiative, aiming to reach one million IT workers by 2021; Peru plans to launch an 'Internet for All' programme in 2018; the Craig Newmark Foundation in collaboration with WEF will collaborate to bring together internet platform giants with multi-stakeholder leaders, as part of efforts to tackle fake news; the Government of Canada and WEF launched a 'Known Traveller digital Identity' prototype to test emerging technologies, with the aim of facilitating more secure and seamless air travel; and WEF launched the Global Centre for Cybersecurity, a multi-stakeholder platform that aims to create a safe operating environment for new technologies like the artificial intelligence, the internet of things, drones and autonomous vehicles.

On sanitation, the Toilet Board Coalition (TBC) highlighted the opportunity of the 'Sanitation Economy,' the future marketplace of tackling the global sanitation crisis through innovative toilet design, smart digital technologies, and the circular economy. During a WEF roundtable discussion, CEOs expressed support for a new Action Agenda for the Sanitation Economy. Unilever CEO Paul Polman said the TBC's work on the Sanitation Economy "highlights the immense business opportunities of providing universal access to safe sanitation," stressing that SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation) should be a key part of companies' growth strategies.

In addition, the WEF's Center for the Fourth Industrial Revolution added new network centers in India, Japan and the United Arab Emirates and several countries and companies joined as partners. Denmark became the first European country to partner with WEF and will collaborate with WEF on green growth, trade and education, gender, and work. On poverty and inequality, Oxfam's Executive Director, Winnie Byanyima said that a future without global extreme poverty "is possible if we redesign our economy to truly reward hard work, rather than wealth."

Additional announcements made at WEF addressed, inter alia, issues related to genomics, decent work, rule of law, education, and food security. On education,

Canada will double its commitment to the Global Partnership for Education Fund, providing an extra \$180 million between 2018 and 2020. The Earth Bio-Genome Project and the Earth Bank of Codes will sequence the DNA of all life on earth, with the aim of averting extinction and tackling habitat loss and bio-piracy. On poverty eradication, the WEF initiative, the Closing the Skills Gap, aims to deliver new skills to 10 million workers by 2020; WEF launched the 'UpLink' initiative to connect start-ups with investors, universities, governments and others; and Common Goal launched a program that aims to break the cycle of poverty by encouraging footballers to pledge one percent of their salaries to charities that use football as a tool for social change. Finally, on food security, the WEF initiative, Meat: The Future, will identify ways to transform the future of meat and protein production to deliver safe, affordable and sustainable protein. On rule of law, Thomson Reuters, Europol and WEF are partnering to tackle human trafficking and money laundering, including by promoting more effective information-sharing and improving compliance.

Many publications addressed topics related to the WEF 48 theme. The Business and Sustainable Development Commission's Blended Finance Taskforce released a consultation paper titled, 'Better Finance, Better World,' to develop actionable recommendations on the 2030 agenda. The annual 'Inclusive Development Index' (IDI) assesses the economic performance of 103 countries on 11 dimensions of economic progress that go beyond gross domestic product (GDP). The report examines living standards and how nations "future-proof" their economies. The 'Global Risks Report' finds that environmental risks are among the most dangerous facing the world. The publication, 'Harnessing the Fourth Industrial Revolution for Life on Land' highlights how human activity has placed increasing stress on the earth's natural systems. 'Innovation with a Purpose: The role of technology innovation in accelerating food systems transformation' identifies emerging technologies that can drive the sustainability, inclusivity, efficiency, and health impacts of food systems to achieve the SDGs. The report, 'Towards a Reskilling Revolution' underscores the importance of life-long learning. Other WEF reports address recycling, the global gender gap, the impact of migration on cities, and data on migration, among other topics.

Sources: <http://sdg.iisd.org>, 26 January 2018



MARINE ENVIRONMENT



Surfers battle plastic pollution around the world

-Andy Swales

UK charity Surfers Against Sewage is the latest group to voice their concerns about the amount of plastic polluting beaches and oceans around the world. The Cornwall-based organisation has been around since 1990, when their sole aim was to focus on improving water quality around the British coastline. Since then, their remit has extended somewhat to include the increasing nuisance, as well as terrifying destruction, caused by plastic waste pollution. Its chief executive Hugo Tagholm has told *Sky Sports News* that surfers have been at the forefront of the problem, both on a day-to-day basis, while enjoying their favourite sport, but also helping out as volunteers clearing up this ever-increasing dangerous mess.

Tagholm, speaking from the charity's base at St Agnes in Cornwall, explained: "Plastics persist in our environment, for many decades, killing many thousands of mammals and birds every year. "They also ruin the aesthetics of our beaches. Scientists are now showing they are making their way, sadly, into our food chain. "So we need to make sure they don't get into our oceans in the first place. We need to turn off the tap of plastics." Surfers against Sewage is a national marine conservation and campaigning charity, set up to protect oceans and beaches. Talking specifically about his own organisation, Tagholm added: "We started out on the single issue of sewage pollution. "Back then there was the chronic problem of sewage being pumped out into the sea, which also polluted our beaches. "And we've had a great effect on that front. In 1990, only 27 per cent of beaches would have passed EU standards but today it is almost 100 per cent which pass the minimum standards. "And that's because of great legislation and campaigning from Surfers Against Sewage." But from those early days, when the charity was formed by a group of Cornish surfers, the focus has moved on and extended greatly. He went on: "We still have work to do on water quality but plastic pollution is a global crisis, and not just in our oceans but in our general environment. It's our number one campaigning issue.

"We work with our 35,000 volunteers every year, cleaning up our beaches from plastic pollution. "And we take their voices right up to Westminster to call for upstream

solutions, to stop the flow of plastic onto beautiful beaches like here in Cornwall. "It's now near the top of the news agenda, and political agenda, and that's great. But we also need to see action and quickly. "We fought long and hard for the 5p plastic bag charge, and that's been a proven success - with nine billion fewer given out already. "Our connection with surfers still drives the charity and regional reps. They are all surfers, people who use the beach, each and every day almost. "They see things on the beach they don't like, and this motivates them to take action with us. "That's why we represent a huge group of people around the UK - and also the world." Surfers Against Sewage also work with schools in a bid to reduce their plastic footprint, and they also have their own museum.

Source: www.skysports.com, 24 January 2018

Fisherman cuts open fish, and what he finds inside is horrifying

-Sean Keach

Shocking footage of garbage pulled from the stomach of a dead fish highlights the terrifying level of pollution in our oceans. The horrifying clip was filmed by a fisherman off the coast of Costa Rica, who cut open the fish after hauling it on board his boat. The fisherman said he believed the fish was unwell and wanted to examine what was causing the mysterious sickness. Once he had dissected the fish, the worker discovered a terrifying array of man-made objects inside its body. In the film, you can clearly see plastic lids, a comb and even a lighter being yanked out from the fish's insides. The creature is believed to be a mahi mahi, better known as the common dolphinfish. The dolphinfish is highly sought after for both sport fishing and commercial fishing. Its habitats include the Caribbean Sea, the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific coast of Costa Rica.

The disturbing video comes just days after British Prime Minister Theresa May launched her 25-year environment plan. Ms May pledged to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste within a quarter of a century, partly in a bid to reduce levels of ocean pollution. In her speech, Ms May said: "In the UK alone, the amount of single-use plastic wasted every year would fill 1000 Royal Albert Halls." "This plastic is ingested by dozens of species of marine mammals and over 100 species of sea birds, causing immense suffering to individual creatures and degrading vital habitats." "One in three

fish caught in the English Channel contains pieces of plastic.” “To tackle it, we will take action at every stage of the production and consumption of plastic.”

Source: www.news.com.au, 25 January 2018

Satellite Monitoring Confirmed Serious Pollution of the Persian Gulf

In 2017, ScanEx and the Institute of Oceanology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IO RAS) implemented a pilot project on satellite monitoring of the Persian Gulf. The results of the research confirmed the information on its serious oil pollution. The Persian Gulf is constantly exposed to oil pollution: according to news agencies, the pollution of its waters is steadily increasing as a result of oil production, which is conducted in 34 fields and more than 800 wells, tanker shipments (up to 20-30 thousand tankers per year), oil leakage in pipelines, standard ship operations and ship accidents (Figures 1, 2). Experts estimate that in the Gulf waters in one way or another, an average of 100-160 thousand tons of oil and oil products per year falls, and the level of oil pollution exceeds the world average by 47 times. To monitor the state of the water area of the bay, specialists used the technology of complex operational satellite monitoring developed by ScanEx, which makes it possible to detect oil pollution with high reliability. For monitoring, radar images (SSRIs) of satellites Sentinel-1A and Sentinel-1B were used, which were located, processed and analyzed on a special geoportal created on the basis of the GeoMixer web-GIS platform. The main help for the analysis and identification of detected spots were detailed navigational charts with objects of the offshore oil and gas complex and maps of the ship's environment in the bay. If necessary, the optical data of the Terra, Aqua, Suomi NPP, Sentinel-2 and Landsat-8 satellites were additionally used to verify the radar data and assess the ecological state of the marine environment.

In total, during the implementation of the project in 2017, more than 300 radars from European satellites Sentinel-1A and Sentinel-1B were received and analyzed, covering in part or in part the Persian Gulf (territorial waters and economic zones of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and United The Arab Emirates). A total of 4905 spots of film / oil contamination were detected on 209 RLIs. The total area of the detected pollution was 13 835 sq. M. km. The area of individual spots varied from 0.5 to 600 square meters. km. Film pollution of anthropogenic origin in the Persian Gulf was found almost everywhere (Figure 3). The vast majority of sunspots are related to oil

and gas production areas, as well as to major shipping routes, some of which run along the long axis of the bay and connect large oil transshipment bases and ports. Anomalously large spills (from 240 to 780 sq. Km) were found in the Iranian sector of the Gulf (south of the Siri Island) at the end of the first decade of March 2017, when an emergency outburst occurred at an oil well in the Siri-E field (Figure 2). According to SkyTruth experts, 300 to 620 cubic meters of oil and oil products were then poured into the Gulf water. A significant part of the detected marine contamination of the sea is ship spills that were produced as a result of standard ship operations: tank washings, ballast water discharges and ship wastes containing oil products (bilge water, workings, engine room water, residual oil products) or illegally. They were detected, mainly, on the main and minor navigable routes, in the areas of tanker activity, as well as in raids and anchorages. The analysis of the sea surface radar and integral maps allowed not only qualitative but also quantitative information about the oil pollution of the Persian Gulf. The monitoring statistics are presented in Fig. 6 and is given in the table; their analysis shows an extremely high pollution of the Gulf in comparison with other areas of the World Ocean where oil is produced. Based on the analysis of integrated pollution maps (Figure 3), the specialists concluded that the Persian Gulf is prone to severe oil pollution, mainly as a result of intensive oil production, oil transportation and active navigation. The current situation threatens the ecology of the Gulf, even with formal observance of global standards and requirements for environmental protection. Systematic radar survey of the water area can help the environmental authorities of the Gulf countries to monitor the Gulf daily, and can also be used as evidence base. “At present, radar satellite monitoring may well be an effective tool for controlling the oil pollution of the Persian Gulf waters, since in the framework of environmental monitoring in the Gulf countries, satellite observations are not regularly analyzed. The analysis of the radar data collected during the monitoring made it possible to visually see the extent of pollution of one of the most unique reservoirs of the World Ocean and gave new information for understanding the essence of the problem. It is to be hoped that the data and results obtained during the monitoring will contribute to a more reliable protection of the marine environment of the Gulf from oil and oil products pollution, and based on remote sensing, GIS and AIS technologies and geoportal solutions, an effective monitoring system will finally be created, – commented on the results of the project leading research associate of the IO RAS.

Source: www.maritimeherald.com, 24 January 2018

Plastic Pollution is killing coral reefs, 4-years study finds

-Christopher Joyce

Millions of tons of plastic waste end up in the ocean every year. And the trash stays there: Whether it's grocery bags or water bottles or kids' toys, plastic is practically indestructible. Now marine scientists have discovered that it's killing coral reefs. A new study based on four years of diving on 159 reefs in the Pacific shows that reefs in four countries — Australia, Thailand, Indonesia and Myanmar — are heavily contaminated with plastic. It clings to the coral, especially branching coral. And where it clings, it sickens or kills. "The likelihood of disease increases from 4 percent to 89 percent when corals are in contact with plastic," researchers report in the journal *Science*. Senior author Drew Harvell at Cornell University says the plastic could be harming coral in at least two ways. First, bacteria and other harmful microorganisms are abundant in the water and on corals; when the coral is abraded, that might invite pathogens into the coral. "It's certainly well known that plastics abrade corals, create new openings," she says. "They basically tear open the skin of the coral and that can allow an infection from anywhere to start."

In addition, Harvell says, plastic can block sunlight from reaching coral. Her group found increased risk of four diseases in coral in contact with plastic. "This is a huge survey," says Harvell. It was the idea of Joleah Lamb, who was at the time, a graduate student. "There are really great studies showing how much plastic is going into the oceans and how much is floating on the surface," says Lamb, who's now a fellow at Cornell University. "But we really didn't have an idea about what's underneath the surface of the ocean." The more they looked, especially in Asian waters, the more they found: bottles, diapers, cotton swabs, food wrappers. They noticed that coral that had plastic didn't look healthy. Based on how much plastic the researchers found while diving, they estimate that over 11 billion plastic items could be entangled in coral reefs in the Asia-Pacific region, home to over half the world's coral reefs. And their survey did not include China, one of the biggest sources of plastic pollution. Australian reefs had the least amount of plastic observed on reefs, which the researchers attribute to a more comprehensive system for waste control. Other countries in the Pacific don't have much control over what ends up in the waste stream. "Massive amounts of plastic are being thrown into the oceans from land," Harvell says, in countries that don't have much recycling and with dumps that are often adjacent to the ocean or waterways that run into the ocean.

Coral reefs already are susceptible to bleaching due to unusually warm water, either from seasonal shifts in water temperature or from human-caused global warming. "Bleached coral is more susceptible to disease," Harvell says. "The bleached coral is stressed. Plastic would make things that much worse." Matthew Savoca, a marine scientist at the the University of California, Davis, who studies the effects of plastic in the ocean, suggests that ocean waters with lots of plastic waste might also carry other pollutants that could also be contributing to higher rates of coral disease. But Lamb says they found that corals within yards of each other showed a noticeable difference: Those with plastic were much more likely to be diseased. "It seems to be something associated with the plastic itself," says Lamb. Exactly how the plastic is causing disease is still unclear. What is clear from numerous studies is that the amount of plastic getting into the oceans is on the rise.

Source: www.npr.org

Republicans should take the lead to stop offshore drilling

- Bill Bryant

When the Trump administration announced its plans to open up the entire Washington coast, including the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary, to oil exploration, I was pissed off. Protecting our coast should not be a partisan issue, but given the sanctuary's history and the true nature of conservatism, especially Northwest conservatism, I knew this was a fight Republicans should lead. After an angry first weekend of the new year, I took the time to call the U.S. Interior Department's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management in the other Washington and asked whether the administration really was considering oil exploration off Washington's coast. I was told it was. "Even in the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary?" I asked. There was a pause, and then, "Could you put that question into an email? We'll get back to you."

The Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary, administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), comprises about half of Washington's coastline, from Cape Flattery to Copalis, plus much of the continental shelf. Its beauty has been compared to Yosemite and the Grand Tetons. Underwater, species unique in the Pacific have been discovered there, prompting NOAA to consider it the equivalent of discovering new rainforests on land. If you haven't been there, it is one special place.

Last summer, my wife Barbara and I hiked and camped along that coast and found it as rugged and majestic as ever. As inheritors of this gem, I believe we're obligated to pass it on unspoiled. That requires us continuing the work of former presidents, and making it clear to this administration that we won't let happen here what happened in January 1969. On a windless, clear day that January, off the coast of Santa Barbara, a drilling rig ruptured, venting oil into the water and onto the beaches. Thousands of seabirds died.

That tragedy led to, among other things, the creation of our Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary. Republican President Richard Nixon responding to the spill, created NOAA to assure ocean resources were developed "without either contaminating the marine environment or upsetting its balance." Two years later, he created national marine sanctuaries. But the protection of our Olympic Coast stretches back beyond Nixon to a much earlier Republican president. Theodore Roosevelt, by executive order, sheltered seabirds and their rookeries by designating Copalis, Flattery Rocks and Quillayute Needles, each a stretch of rocks and reefs along Washington's coast, as national wildlife refuges. Then, by decree, he created the Mount Olympus National Monument. It remained for those who followed him to connect his mountain monument and coastal refuges. Unfortunately, President Woodrow Wilson, a Democrat, knee-capped that effort by cutting Roosevelt's Olympic National Monument in half. But President Franklin Roosevelt, a Democrat, reinvigorated his Republican cousin's initiative by creating the Olympic National Park. In the middle of the 20th century, President Harry Truman added a bit of coastline to it.

Those early efforts protected some glaciers, valleys and beaches, and thwarted a contemplated highway that would have traversed from Hood Canal over Anderson Pass (I'm cringing just imagining it) to the coast. But, it was, in a very real sense, nonpartisan U.S. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas who kept our coastline remote.

On a summer day in 1958, 70 people from across the country joined Douglas — a graduate of Yakima High School and Whitman College who had a lifelong love of the Northwest's wild place — at Cape Alava for a three-day, 20-mile beach hike protesting a planned coastal highway. Justice Douglas asked, "Do roads have to go everywhere?" and he argued for preserving wilderness and wildness. His hike drew national attention; highway plans were abandoned.

Manx plastic use must 'significantly' fall to reduce marine pollution

Later, Republican President Gerald Ford added more coastline to the park, and, Republican Ronald Reagan's administration expanded the criteria used to qualify an area for sanctuary status. Under those expanded criteria, Congress named the Olympic Coast a potential marine sanctuary. Congresswoman Jolene Unsoeld, a Democrat, passed language prohibiting oil exploration in a future Olympic sanctuary. Six years later, President Clinton, a Democrat, conferred marine sanctuary status on our Olympic coastline.

While the efforts were bipartisan, the work of previous Republican presidents — Reagan, Ford, Nixon and Theodore Roosevelt — should resonate with the current president and with Washington state Republicans. Roosevelt didn't create bird refuges only to have them decimated by an oil spill, as happened in Santa Barbara. Nixon didn't establish sanctuaries in response to the then-worst oil spill in our nation's history, so that we could drill in or near them. Republicans should feel a special obligation to lead the opposition to this drilling, not only to honor and extend the work of these former Republican presidents, but also because it's the truly conservative, especially Northwest conservative, thing to do. The heart of conservatism involves protecting that which cannot be replaced. True conservatism, whether environmental or fiscal, embodies sustainability. Drilling for every last drop of oil in every spectacular corner of our country is not sustainable; it is not conservative; it should not be Republican. It pains me that that rings hollow on too many ears. That it does is on us Republicans, but at this moment, when drilling off our coast is being contemplated, we can renew our commitment to Northwest conservative values.

Some readers might think I'm an odd one to lead this charge. After all, as a Port of Seattle commissioner, I supported leasing part of a port terminal to Foss Maritime, knowing Foss would service Shell vessels bound for Arctic drilling projects. I believe that was different: President Barack Obama had already extended Arctic drilling leases to Shell, so prohibiting Foss from servicing Shell vessels in Seattle wouldn't have inhibited Arctic drilling, it only would have transferred maritime jobs to a different port. I want to ensure no oil drilling leases are ever issued for Washington's coast.

That's why I emailed that question to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management. Just before 5 p.m. that same day in early January, I received a response from the Bureau of Energy Management's Pacific Coast office in California. It read, "Thank you for your question. BOEM has no authority to offer oil and gas leases in national marine

sanctuaries. Therefore, BOEM will not consider areas within the Olympia National Marine Sanctuary for future leasing.”

That’s a victory. As long as all the continental shelf in and adjacent to the sanctuary really has been eliminated from leasing, that email removed about half of Washington’s coast from consideration, but the other half — from Ocean Shores to the Columbia River —remains at risk. A spill there would threaten tourism, salmon recovery and shellfish harvests — and, being so close to the sanctuary, a spill could threaten the seabirds Roosevelt protected.

The entire Washington coast needs to be protected from drilling. That’s why I will testify at the Trump administration’s public hearing at Tacoma’s Convention Center on Feb. 5. And it’s why I have invited the American Conservation Coalition, a millennial-led national organization of young conservatives who are committed to protecting our planet, to join me this summer on a three-day hike along the same route Douglas took. That hike will protest oil exploration off our coast. Given the true nature of Northwest conservatism and Republican initiatives to protect our coastline, it’s appropriate for a Republican to speak out at a public hearing and organize this hike, but given it was bipartisan efforts that truly protected our coast, it’s appropriate for people of all political views to join us.

Source: crosscut.com, 22 January 2018



The Origin of ‘Indo-Pacific’ as Geopolitical Construct

- Mercy A. Kuo

Trans-Pacific View author Mercy Kuo regularly engages subject-matter experts, policy practitioners, and strategic thinkers across the globe for their diverse insights into U.S. Asia policy. This conversation with Dr. Gurpreet S. Khurana – executive director of the National Maritime Foundation in New Delhi, India and a Captain in the Indian Navy who is credited with the first use of the term “Indo-Pacific” in the context of strategic and geopolitical discourse in India – is the 124th in “*The Trans-Pacific View Insight Series*.”

Explain the essence of “Indo-Pacific” as a geopolitical framework.

One often comes across the eastward shift of the world’s economic “center of gravity” toward the Asian continent. Given the inextricable link between geoeconomics and the ocean realm, the continent’s rim-land is likely to lead Asia’s “rise.” This made it exigent for the “maritime underbelly” of Asia – the Indo-Pacific – to be regarded as a singular and integrated geopolitical construct, wherein lie tremendous geoeconomic opportunities as well as daunting security challenges, not only for Asia, but also for the rest of the wider world.

Another essential underpinning of the Indo-Pacific idea is the growing eminence of India. Even though the “Indo” in “Indo-Pacific” represents the Indian Ocean and not India, the global community expects India to play a major role, including in terms of ensuring a maritime environment that is conducive for economic growth and development. The long-prevalent “Asia-Pacific” construct was inadequate and ambiguous in terms of incorporating India in the affairs of the region.

What elements – values, rationale, objectives – constitute the “Indo-Pacific” concept?

By the turn of the 21st Century, the geopolitical connect between the Indian Ocean and the western Pacific had become increasingly palpable, in both the geoeconomic and security dimensions. The first is exemplified by the critical dependence of East Asia on

the natural resources of West Asia and Africa via the Indian Ocean. The security dimension is best represented by the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) launched in 2004 to counter sea-borne proliferation of WMDs, which focused on the maritime swath stretching from West Asia (Iran and Syria) to Northeast Asia (North Korea). Such interconnectedness led analysts like me to the search for a suitable regional nomenclature. “Asia” was too broad and continental. “Asia-Pacific” – which traditionally stood for “the Asian littoral of the Pacific” – was inadequate. The “Indo-Pacific” (Indian Ocean–Pacific Ocean combine) – seemed more appropriate.

The trigger for the “Indo-Pacific” coinage was China’s increasing politico-military assertiveness and the ensuing enunciation of China’s “String of Pearls” strategy in 2005 by a U.S. think-tank. These developments led to anxieties in many regional countries, including India and Japan. In 2006, India and Japan began sharing strategic assessments. During my discussions with Japanese analysts at IDSA [Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses] in New Delhi in October 2006, we took note of China’s key strategic vulnerability, viz, its energy lifelines transiting the Indian Ocean. The “Indo-Pacific” idea was an opportunity to showcase the Indian Navy’s capability to moderate China’s behavior, thereby dissuading its future aggressiveness. This led to the publication of my paper titled “Security of Sea Lines: Prospects for India-Japan Cooperation” in IDSA’s *Strategic Analyses* journal (January 2007) explaining the Indo-Pacific concept, albeit in a subtle manner. A few months later in August 2007, the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe addressed the Indian Parliament, speaking of the “Confluence of the Indian and Pacific Oceans.”

Assess the U.S. administration’s use of “Indo-Pacific” versus “Asia-Pacific” in the context of political rhetoric and foreign policy strategy.

Since the beginning of the current decade, the U.S. administration realized the inadequacy of the “Asia-Pacific” [term] to meet its geopolitical and attendant foreign policy objectives in Asia, for two key reasons. The first was China’s expanding politico-military activities from the western Pacific to the Indian Ocean. The second was the imperative to incorporate New Delhi into the region-wide security architecture, as evidenced by the U.S. desire for India to be a regional “net security provider.” This led the U.S. to initially expand the “Asia-Pacific” to the “Indo-Asia Pacific,” encompassing the entire swath of Indian and Pacific oceans. The “Indo-Asia Pacific” [concept] was necessary for the U.S. to maintain its relevance as a resident power in Asia. However, while the term had a sound geoeconomic rationale, President Donald Trump preferred to shorten it to “Indo-Pacific,” ostensibly, to focus on the security dimension of

America's geopolitical ends – primarily relating to China – that necessitated a more robust collaboration with U.S. allies and partners.

What is New Delhi's vision and policy implementation of "Indo-Pacific" vis-à-vis China and the United States?

Since around 2010 when the Indo-Pacific idea gained currency, statements by India's apex political leaders indicate that New Delhi has found promise in the idea – including its rationale and objectives – to further India's national interests in its extended eastern maritime neighborhood. These include geoeconomic interests, good order at sea, and freedom of navigation, but that is not all. Considering that India's geostrategic frontier vis-à-vis China is steadily expanding eastwards from the Indian Ocean, New Delhi also seeks to develop a credible strategic deterrence against China. The "Indo-Pacific" construct provides India a valuable opportunity to partner with the resident countries and major stakeholder powers of Indo-Pacific, with whom these interests converge.

Since 2014 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi assumed office, his revitalized Act East Policy has provided policy ballast to the Indo-Pacific concept. In tandem with Act East, in 2015, the Indian Navy promulgated its new maritime security strategy, which expanded India's "areas of maritime interest" to the entire western and southwestern Pacific Ocean. However, notwithstanding India's recent involvement in the "quadrilateral" (Australia, India, Japan, and the U.S.), there are calls from the Indian strategic community for New Delhi to demonstrate a greater commitment to implement its Act East [Policy], and even broaden the scope of Modi's vision of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) in tandem with Act East.

Is "Indo-Pacific" a sphere of influence? Explain.

As mentioned earlier, the "Indo-Pacific" idea was originally conceived in 2006-07 for a more constructive geopolitical amalgamation of the Indian Ocean and the western Pacific regions, including for coping with the growing comprehensive power of China. However, from the realist perspective, geopolitics is much about establishing spheres of influence; therefore, the Indo-Pacific as a geopolitical construct will necessarily involve such competition. While the U.S. seeks to maintain its influence in the region in face of the Chinese challenge, it also seeks to prop up India's influence eastwards of the Malacca Straits, and Japan's influence in the Indian Ocean.

The Indo-Pacific is, however, not an exclusive concept. It will also help China to expand its influence in the Indian Ocean, wherein Beijing's critical interests lie, and reinforce its geopolitical strategy being implemented through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This is possibly why China has not expressed any resentment of the Indo-Pacific, at least not explicitly.

Source: thediplomat.com, 25 January 2018

The ASEAN embrace

- Syed Munir Khasru

India can act as a vital bridge between South and East Asia

Prime Minister Narendra Modi used India's Republic Day to host heads of state/government of the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). As India's 'Look East Policy', matures into an 'Act East Policy', a strong relationship with ASEAN is no longer a policy option; rather it is an economic and strategic necessity.

Economy, trade, investment

While India-ASEAN trade value stood at \$76.53 billion in 2014-15, China-ASEAN trade value reached \$452.2 billion in 2016, almost six times than that of India. Similarly, Indian investments continue to remain marginal in the ASEAN region – it was around \$224 million in 2015-2016 while Chinese investment over the same period totalled over \$3 billion. However, Indian investments in ASEAN are likely to grow as there has been increased liberalisation and deregulation regarding outward foreign investments. The Tata Group already has a strong presence in Myanmar and is investing in the IT and agricultural sectors, which will create capacity and generate employment. Infrastructure is a key area where there is much potential. The India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project will significantly boost connectivity between India-Myanmar leading up to the rest of Southeast Asia. Enhanced connectivity between the two countries will not only serve India but also neighbouring Bangladesh. A railway or highway such as Bangkok-Yangon-Delhi has to pass through Bangladesh, making the

country an intermediate beneficiary. India, which is vying to become a regional leader in South Asia, can score major points with its South Asian neighbours by connecting them to East Asia.

Strategic issues and security

Uncertain regional geopolitics coupled with the rise of economies in the region will require Asian governments to adapt to a newer political environment, economic realities, and a different regulatory ecosystem. Businesses and governments will have to confront disruptions to traditional employment structures and loss of jobs caused by digital technologies and the impending Fourth Industrial Revolution. The region's multifaceted challenges require dynamic and forward-looking policymaking. To reiterate Mr. Modi's point, engagement with ASEAN is not only confined to trade and is becoming increasingly multi-dimensional.

India-ASEAN strategic cooperation gets trickier given China's territorial claim on the resource-rich South China Sea. The tug of war between China and India to dominate the Indian Ocean has given rise to maritime rivalry. When it comes to the South China Sea, it is in India's interest to have freedom of navigation, unfettered access to common waters and respect for international maritime law. India and the Singapore Navy conducted SIMBEX-17, a week-long bilateral military exercise in the South China Sea in 2017. Given the prevailing regional power imbalance created by a declining U.S. and an assertive China, India and ASEAN are well poised to become strategic partners in ensuring regional peace and stability. Battling non-traditional risks such as terrorism, human trafficking, cybercrime and piracy also provide opportunities for greater cooperation.

Socio-cultural ties

The presence of the Indian diaspora in almost all ASEAN nations has also helped strengthen ties. Almost 1.6 million Indians call Malaysia their second home. The Indian film industry has a huge fan base in Malaysia and Singapore. For example, of the editions of the International Indian Film Academy Awards held so far, a few have been held in ASEAN countries. Southeast Asia is even overtaking Europe as a filming location for Indian films. With an assertive China driving the Belt and Road Initiative and U.S. disengagement in the region, India has to navigate carefully especially when many nations, including those in ASEAN, are looking for options that promote economic interests and protect territorial sovereignty. At such a critical juncture in

East and South Asian geopolitics, the significance of ASEAN from an Indian perspective can hardly be overemphasised. As Singapore's elder-statesman, Lee Kuan Yew, argued many years ago, India must be "part of the Southeast Asia's balance of forces" and "a counterweight to China" in the Indian Ocean. The "Act East" policy needs to be acted upon with a sense of purpose and priority before India can become a reliable and strategic partner of ASEAN.

Source: www.thehindu.com, 27 January 2018

India boosts maritime reach with Seychelles pact to build naval facilities

NEW DELHI/PORT VICTORIA: India has signed a 20-year pact with the Seychelles to build an airstrip and a jetty for its navy in the island chain, the two countries said, as the South Asian nation steps up a contest with China for influence in the Indian Ocean. China last year inaugurated its first overseas military base in Djibouti, near one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, deepening Indian insecurities and pushing it to gain a foothold in the region. The agreement signed in the Seychelles' capital of Victoria last weekend provides for India to develop the airstrip and jetty on the Assumption islands, near another shipping route. "India is helping us free of charge, and the facilities and activities will entirely be at the control of Seychelles and will be conducted as per the laws of Seychelles," Barry Faure, its secretary of state for foreign affairs, told Reuters.

But nothing had been leased to India and the new facilities would help Seychelles better control its exclusive economic zone of 1.3 million square kilometres, Faure added. First announced during Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's trip to the islands in 2015, the pact faced problems, as critics who feared a handover of territory demanded that the Seychelles government make clear the terms of India's role. But those concerns have since been tackled, officials said. India and Seychelles are maritime neighbours with a stake in each other's security, said Indian Foreign Secretary Subrahmaniam Jaishankar, who signed the agreement in his last official action before retiring this week. "India and Seychelles have drawn up a cooperation agenda that covers joint efforts in anti-piracy operations, and enhanced surveillance and monitoring to prevent intrusions by potential economic offenders," he said. These are people engaged in illegal fishing, poaching, drug and human trafficking, he added.

China has been building ports, power stations and highways across Asia, but the terms of some of its investments have angered people. In Sri Lanka, China faced criticism after taking control of the southern port of Hambantota it had built in a debt-to-equity swap deal. India has tried to be more careful, avoiding giving hard loans and casting its assistance as a joint endeavour. But military officials called the Seychelles pact a big step in extending the reach of India's navy, which is expected to rotate its ships and aircraft through the islands. "The development is a clear indicator that India's geo-strategic frontier is expanding in tandem with China's growing strategic footprint in the Indo-Pacific," said Captain Gurpreet Khurana of the Indian Navy's National Maritime Foundation.

Source: www.channelnewsasia.com, 31 January 2018

How Australia's Maritime Strategy and Partnerships in the Indo-Pacific upset China

- David Scott

Introduction

On 4 September 2017, an Australian naval task group departed from Sydney and embarked on a unique deployment called Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2017 to participate in a series of key naval exercises with a variety of partners in the Indian Ocean, the South China Sea and the Pacific – i.e. the Indo-Pacific. Its commander, Jonathan Earley, oversaw six ships and over 1300 personnel, making it the largest coordinated task group from Australia to deploy to the region since the early 1980s.

The immediate purposes of the exercise were given by the Australian Department of Defence as two-fold; namely soft security “focused on demonstrating the ADF’s Humanitarian and Disaster Relief regional response capability, as well as hard security “further supporting security and stability in Australia’s near region.” The latter was described as demonstrating “high-end military capabilities such as anti-submarine warfare.” Geopolitically this reflected what the Defence Minister Marise Payne called “heightened interests in the Indo-Pacific” for Australia, with frequently recurring China-related considerations.

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not comment on the Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2017 deployment. However, the Chinese state media was certain on Australian motives, running articles like "Australia-led military drills show tougher China stance" (*Global Times*, 7 September). In the article, Liu Caiyu argued that "Australia's largest military exercises in the Indo-Pacific region show it has toughened its stance toward China, especially on South China Sea issues." The *People's Daily* wondered, pointedly, given this deployment into the South China Sea and East China Sea, "What does Australia want to do with the largest military exercise encircling China in 30 years?"

It was revealing that Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2017 was explained by the Australian Department of Defence as enhancing military cooperation with some of Australia's "key regional partners"; specifically named as Brunei, Cambodia, the Federated States of Micronesia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, and Timor-Leste. Politically the absence of China as a partner was deliberate but accurate, and in which the range of other countries represented a degree of tacit external balancing on the part of Australia.

The Itinerary

The task force's first engagement activity announced on 8 September was for HMAS *Adelaide* to conduct aviation training with USS *Bonhomme Richard*, a large American amphibious assault ship, on the east coast of Australia. HMAS *Adelaide* then completed further amphibious landing craft and aviation training with the Republic of Singapore's amphibious ship, RSS *Resolution* while deployed further up the east coast of Australia off the coast of Townsville.

The first external port call was carried out on 20 September as HMAS *Adelaide*, HMAS *Darwin*, and HMAS *Toowoomba* steamed into Dili, the capital of East Timor, to deliver a portable hospital ahead of Exercise Hari'i Hamutuk. This engineering exercise involves Australian, Japan, U.S., and East Timor's military forces working side-by-side to build skills and support East Timor's development. This set the seal nicely on their reconciliation over claims in the Timor Sea, achieved when the two sides reached agreement at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague.

HMAS *Parramatta* proceeded northward to conduct joint patrols from 22-26 September with the Philippine Navy in the Sulu Sea, as part of the annual Lumbas exercises running since 2007. HMAS *Parramatta* sailed eastwards to Palau for a three-day stop from 22-24 September. Significantly Palau recognizes Taiwan (ROC) rather

than Beijing (PRC) as the legitimate government of mainland China. A further extension saw HMAS *Parramatta* visit Yap on 27 September. Its stay at Yap included cross-deck training with the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) Patrol Boat FSS *Independence*, an Australian-gifted *Pacific*-class Patrol Boat. Both stops showed Australian naval outreach into the so-called “second island chain” (*dier daolian*) which Chinese naval strategy has long shown interest in penetrating, as with deployments of underwater survey vessels around the Caroline Islands in August 2017.

Meanwhile, HMAS *Adelaide* and HMAS *Toowoomba* paid a port call to *Jakarta* from 24-26 September. It was significant that this brought to an end a previous period of coolness between the two governments, at a time when Indonesia was becoming more assertive in its own claims over maritime waters in the South China Sea, renaming waters around the Natuna archipelago (which also fall within China’s 9-dash line) as the North Natuna Sea.

HMAS *Adelaide* and HMAS *Parramatta* then rendezvoused at the Malaysian port of Port Klang from 1-5 October to carry out joint Humanitarian and Disaster Relief exercises and demonstrations on 4 October. Relations with Malaysia have remained strong, anchored through the Australian presence at Butterworth Airbase under the Five Power Defence Agreement (5PDFA) and the bilateral 25-year old joint defense program between Australia and Malaysia.

Australian naval units then retraced their steps and entered the South China Sea. These waters are mostly claimed by China within its 9-dash line, which includes the Spratly Islands (disputed in varying degrees with Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Philippines and Vietnam) and with Beijing in control of the Paracels (disputed with Vietnam) since 1974. China viewed the arrival of the Australian Navy in the South China Sea with some unease, with the state media warning that the “Australian fleet must be wary of meddling in South China sea affairs” (*Global Times*, 24 September).

Having paid then a friendly port call to the small, oil-rich state of Brunei from 30 September to 2 October, HMAS *Melbourne* then moved up with HMAS *Parramatta* to Japan, where they arrived on 9 October to take part in the bilateral Nichi Gou Trident exercise with the Japanese Navy off the coast of Tokyo. The ships practiced anti-submarine warfare, ship handling, aviation operations, and surface gunnery. This exercise has been alternatively hosted between Australia and Japan since 2009. Security links with Japan have been considerably strengthened

during the last decade since the Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation was signed in March 2007.

Simultaneously, further deployment into the Indian Ocean was carried out by HMAS *Toowoomba* which carried out a four-day goodwill visit to Port Blair from 12-15 October. Port Blair is the key archipelago possession of India dominating the Straits of Malacca and the Bay of Bengal, and the site for India's front-line Andaman and Nicobar Command. Various joint exercises were carried out between the Indian Navy and Australian Navy. This reinforced the strengthening naval links between Australia and India, flagged up in the Framework for Security Cooperation signed in November 2014, and subsequently demonstrated with their bilateral AUSINDEX exercises in June 2017 off the western coast of Australia and in September 2015 in the Bay of Bengal.

Meanwhile, HMAS *Adelaide* and HMAS *Darwin* proceeded to the Philippines for a further goodwill visit from 10-15 October. Maritime links have been further strengthened of late with the donation of two *Balikpapan*-class heavy landing crafts by Canberra in 2015, and nominal-rate sale of three more in 2016. Australia's concerns had been on show in Defense Secretary Marise Payne's discussions in Manila on 11 September. These have been partly to bolster the Philippines against ISIS infiltration into the Muslim-inhabited southern province of Mindanao, but also to bolster the Philippines' maritime capacity in the South China Seas against a rising China. With regard to the South China Sea, Australia has called for China to comply with the findings of the UNCLOS tribunal in July 2016, in the case brought by the Philippines, which rejected Chinese claims in the South China Seas.

HMAS *Adelaide* and HMAS *Darwin* then re-crossed the South China Sea to pay a port call at Singapore on 23 October. This maintains the regular appearance of Australian military forces at Singapore, which have been an ongoing feature of the 5 Power Defence Forces Agreement (5PDFFA). While HMAS *Darwin* returned to Darwin, HMAS *Adelaide* paid a friendly port call at Papua New Guinea's main port of Port Moresby on 11 November. Papua New Guinea is Australia's closest neighbour, a former colony, and (like East Timor) the subject of Chinese economic blandishments.

HMAS *Melbourne* and *Parramatta* and a P-8A submarine hunter aircraft moved across from Japan to the Korean peninsula for an extended stay from 27 October – 6 November. This included their participation in the biannual Exercise Haedoli Wallaby, initiated in 2012, which focuses on anti-submarine drills with the South Korean Navy.

This also reflected a reiteration of Australian readiness to deploy forces into Northeast Asia amid heightened tensions surrounding North Korean nuclear missile advancements. Naval logic given by the Task Group commander, Jonathan Earley was that “as two regional middle powers that share common democratic values as well as security interests, Haedoli Wallaby is an important activity for Australia and the ROK.” Wider trilateral activities were shown with the *Melbourne* and the *Parramatta* then carrying out anti-missile drills with U.S. and South Korean destroyers in the East China Sea on 6-7 November.

Australia’s Strategic Proclamations as Context

The general context for the Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2017 deployment was the explicit focus on the “Indo-Pacific” as Australia’s strategic frame of reference stressed in the Defence White Papers of 2013 and 2016, and rising concerns about China’s growing maritime presence. This strategic context for the Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2017 deployment was elaborated at length by the Defence Minister Marise Payne at the Seapower Conference in Sydney on 3 October. Payne’s speech contained strong messaging on Australian assets, deployment, and the Indo-Pacific focus of Australian defense strategy.

With regard to assets, Payne announced and welcomed “the most ambitious upgrade of our naval fleet in Australia since the Second World War” to create “a regional superior future naval force being built in Australia which will include submarines, frigates, and a fleet of offshore patrol vessels.” She also noted her own pleasure in commissioning Australia’s “largest warship” (*HMAS Adelaide*, commissioned on 4 December 2015) and “most powerful” air warfare destroyer (*HMAS Hobart*, commissioned on 23 September 2017). Australia’s second air warfare destroyer, *Brisbane*, began sea trials off the coast of southern Australia in late November 2017. This current naval buildup could be seen as demonstrating external balancing, but of course this raises the question of external balancing against whom – to which the unstated answer is China. With regard to deployments, Payne enthused on decisive opportunities for a fifth generation navy: “Altogether these and those future capabilities will transform the Australian fleet into a fully operational, fifth generation navy. The RAN will be able to deploy task groups equipped with a wide range of capabilities, from high-end war fighting to responsive and agile humanitarian assistance ... To envisage that future, high-end war fighting to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, we also only need to look at the ADF’s Joint Task Group Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2017 that’s currently underway in the Indo-Pacific region.”

Finally, the whole Indo-Pacific nature of Australian maritime strategy was stressed: “From the Malacca, the Sunda and Lombok Straits to the South and East China Seas, many of the most vital areas of globalisation and sources of geopolitical challenge are in our backyard. If the twenty-first century will be the Asian Century, then it will also be the Maritime Century. Just as surely as the balance of global economic and military weight is shifting in the Indo-Pacific, so too is it focused on the waters of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. With established and emerging maritime powers across the region rapidly expanding their naval capabilities, the waters to Australia’s north are set to teem with naval platforms, the numbers and the strength of which has never been seen before [...] In a crowded and contested Indo-Pacific maritime sphere, Australia must present a credible deterrent strategy, and to do our part in contributing to the peace, stability and security, and to good order at sea [...] Our naval capabilities will therefore be integral [...] to the preservation of the rules-based global order, and safeguarding peace in the maritime Indo-Pacific.” China was not specifically mentioned but was the unstated reason for much of these Indo-Pacific challenges that Australia felt it had to respond to, with its behavior in the South China Sea frequently the subject of the strictures on maintaining a “rules based” order.

The South China Sea issue was on public view at the Australia-U.S.-Japan trilateral strategic dialogue (TSD) meeting on 7 August 2017 where Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop joined her Japanese and U.S. counterparts in expressing “serious concerns” over “coercive” actions and reclamation projects being carried out and urged China to accept the ruling against it by the UNCLOS tribunal. Finally they announced their intentions to keep deploying in the South China Sea, into what they considered were international waters. In June 2017, Australia had already joined Japan, Canada, and the United States for two days of military exercises in the South China Sea.

As Vice Admiral Tim Barrett, Australia’s Chief of Naval Staff, noted in his speech on “Law of the Sea Convention in the Asia Pacific Region: Threats, challenges and opportunities,” despite “the increasingly aggressive actions taken by some nations to assert their claims over disputed maritime boundaries ...[...] *the Navy will continue to exercise our rights under international law to freedom of navigation and overflight.*” Australian commentators were quick to point out its significance. In effect China was in mind as a threat and challenge. Although Australia has not taken a formal position on rival claims on South China Sea waters, it had strongly criticized Chinese reclamation projects and military buildups in the South China Sea, hence *Global Time* articles like “South China Sea issue drags Sino-Australian ties into rough waters”

(20 June 2017). Even as *Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2017* units ploughed across the Western Pacific, Australia officials joined their U.S., Japan, and Indian counterparts on 12 November in a revived Quad format on the sidelines of the ASEAN summit. Australian concerns, shared with its partners, were clearly expressed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT): “upholding the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific and respect for international law, freedom of navigation [...] and upholding maritime security in the Indo-Pacific.” The official Chinese response at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was minimal, “we hope that such relations would not target a third party” (14 November), followed by sharper comments in the state media on Australian participation being unwise (*Global Times*, “Australia rejoining Quad will not advance regional prosperity, unity, 15 November). The so-called Quad had emerged in 2007 with meetings between officials on the sidelines of the ASEAN summit, with Australia joining in the Malabar exercises held in the Bay of Bengal by India, Japan, and the U.S. Australia subsequently withdrew from that format, though continuing to strengthen bilateral and trilateral naval links with these other three partners. This renewed *Quad* setting is likely to see Australia rejoin the Malabar exercises being held in 2018.

It was no surprise that this Indo-Pacific setting was reinforced with the Foreign Policy White Paper released on 23 November with its listing of “Indo-Pacific partnerships” in which “the Indo–Pacific democracies of Japan, Indonesia, India, and the Republic of Korea are of first order importance to Australia” as “major partners.” China’s absence from this listing of Indo-Pacific partners was revealing. Balancing considerations were tacitly acknowledged in the White Paper: “To support a balance in the Indo–Pacific favourable to our interests and promote an open, inclusive, and rules-based region, Australia will also work more closely with the region’s major democracies, bilaterally and in small groupings. In addition to the United States, our relations with Japan, Indonesia, India, and the Republic of [South] Korea are central to this agenda.” China was again absent from this listing, which was no surprise given how the White Paper noted that “Australia is particularly concerned about the unprecedented pace and scale of China’s activities. Australia opposes the use of disputed features and artificial structures in the South China Sea for military purposes.” In China this was immediately rejected by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as “irresponsible remarks on the South China Sea issue. We are gravely concerned about this...” and also in the state media (*Global Times*, “China slams Australian White Paper remarks on South China Sea,” 23 November). This explains the extreme sensitivity China had shown over the *Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2017* deployment into the South China Sea.

Conclusion

Consequently 2017 ended by palpable Australia-China maritime friction, when China's Ministry of Defense gave details of discussions between China's Navy commander Shen Jinlong and his Australian counterpart Vice Admiral Tim Barrett. The Chinese statement said that "in the last year, the Australian military's series of actions in the South China Sea have run counter to the general trend of peace and stability. This does not accord with ... forward steps in cooperation in all areas between the two countries." In retrospect Australia's maritime strategy shows itself to be primarily Indo-Pacific oriented, with its increasing concerns over China generating a response of external balancing through naval exercises and cooperation with India, Japan, the U.S., and a multitude of other partners, and with an increasing focus on restraining China in the South China Sea. China has been upset.

Source: cimsec.org, 08 January 2018

Fallout from Philippines' pivot to China

-Rahul Dancel

China's presence in the Philippines has never been more pronounced than it is now. Manila recently allowed a Chinese ship to conduct maritime research at a resource-rich vast underwater plateau known as Benham Rise, east of the main island of Luzon, near US bases in Guam and Hawaii. For months, the Philippines has been drumming up a joint venture with China to explore for oil and gas in a contested area of the South China Sea. China is also dipping its fingers into the Philippine telecoms industry. Shenzhen-based telco ZTE is leading a consortium that plans to invest US\$2 billion (S\$2.6 billion) to build 50,000 microcell towers and compete with the two leading players. Most big-ticket infrastructure projects have some level of Chinese involvement. Tourists from China are also pouring in. The Chinese have dislodged the Koreans as the top tourists on the resort island of Boracay. Some 376,000 tourists from the mainland visited Boracay last year, compared with 375,000 from South Korea. A historic ruling by an international tribunal in The Hague granting the Philippines rights to vast waters China is claiming, meanwhile, is fast slipping out of the national consciousness.

All this, of course, plays to President Rodrigo Duterte's brand of diplomacy. Since he took office in 2016, ties between Manila and Beijing have never been as warm or mutually beneficial.

China has pledged over US\$24 billion in investment and loans to help finance Mr Duterte's ambitious 3 trillion peso (S\$77 billion) "Build, Build, Build" infrastructure plan. Beijing has also backed, with funding and weapons, Mr Duterte's brutal crackdown on the narcotics trade and war against Islamist terrorists. In turn, Mr Duterte has set aside the decision from The Hague. He has also looked the other way as China fortifies its island bases in the South China Sea. When told China had transformed Fiery Cross reef into a 2.8 sq km airbase, Mr Duterte's spokesman Harry Roque said "there is still no breach of good faith, as long as China has not embarked on new reclamations". Mr Duterte is indeed rolling out the red carpet for China. That pivot, however, has not come without consequences, especially as it relates to the Philippines' decades-long relationship with the United States. US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis has turned to Indonesia and Vietnam, instead of the Philippines, to lead a pushback against China's expansion in the South China Sea. Mr Duterte's aides have been obfuscating his pro-China remarks to allay concerns in Washington. Seeking to downplay the Chinese presence at Benham Rise, Foreign Secretary Alan Cayetano said the Philippines, since 2000, has approved all 13 requests from the US to conduct maritime research there, all nine Japanese requests, and all four from South Korea. China filed 18 requests, but only two were approved, he said. "I'll let the numbers speak for themselves," he told reporters. "Tell me, who are we favouring?" Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, meanwhile, said Manila would lodge a diplomatic protest over the militarisation of Fiery Cross reef. "If it is true, and we can prove that they have been putting soldiers, and even weapons systems, that will be a violation of what they said," he said.

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Cannot falter in implementing 'Act East' policy

- T R Ramachandran

THE negotiations connected with the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership has also floundered due to India's concerns about unfettered access to Chinese goods

amid ASEAN resistance to movement of Indian services and labour. Having the ASEAN leaders as joint chief guests at the 79th Republic Day celebrations on January 26 is a major diplomatic achievement for prime minister Narendra Modi. It has laid the foundation for moving from the late Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao's 'Look East' policy to a much desired and long overdue 'Act East' initiative. This came to the fore during the Commemorative Summit between India and the ten-member South East Asian nations which has set the tone for deeper integration of the region amid China's increasing expansionist designs. This is particularly so in the wake of its Naval forays in the Indo-Pacific coupled with the Belt and Road connectivity project having the portends of changing the equations in the region. ASEAN and India have underlined the need for enlarging security, economic and social-cultural cooperation and connectivity. These encompass measures for maritime transport, trade and a "code of conduct" for the South China Sea.

Notwithstanding the fault lines in the New Delhi-Beijing ties, the Indian diaspora has made a positive impact in the ASEAN countries. New Delhi and ASEAN realise with the demand for goods in the Western economies on the decline, it has to find ways whereby markets grow for increasing trade. The continuing tension between the great powers — the US and Russia or the US and China — it has become necessary for the countries of ASEAN not aligned with anyone and India to forge a common understanding. Both Modi and Singapore's prime minister Lee Hsien Loong, who is also the Chairman of ASEAN, thought alike emphasising it is time to leave behind the cold war divisions and reap the potential of their proximity. They also reminded that India's cultural and trade ties with Southeast Asia go back 2000 years.

Nevertheless, New Delhi has encountered glitches in fulfilling the commitment pertaining to trade and maritime security made six years back in 2012 at the gathering of leaders from ASEAN and India in this country. Similarly, the negotiations connected with the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership has also floundered due to India's concerns about unfettered access to Chinese goods amid ASEAN resistance to movement of Indian services and labour. Then the much talked about connectivity between ASEAN and India through this country's Northeast to Myanmar and beyond has also been held up. Simply put, an all out and determined push is required to integrate India into the ASEAN equation, which is no longer an option, but a necessity. ASEAN leaders believe India is an important component and has a key role to play in the Indo-Pacific region's peace and prosperity. Needless to say the countries of this region have to deal with uncertain regional geopolitics along

with the rise of economies. This will require a new political environment coupled with the economic realities and a different regulatory system. Governments will have to face disruptions due to digital technologies resulting in multi-faceted challenges requiring forward looking policy as trade is becoming multi-dimensional.

It is in India's interest to have freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, access to common waters and respect for international maritime law. The question is whether China matters in the ASEAN grouping. It does with serious misgivings. The countries out of its ambit have since joined the grouping like Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Myanmar. It is becoming increasingly clear that the drift in the India-ASEAN relationship has to end. The Indo-ASEAN conclave was followed by further diplomacy on Sunday last when New Delhi played host to Cambodian leader Hun Sen during a bilateral visit to boost ties in defence, security and counter terrorism. Modi announced a line of credit in several key areas like health and digital connectivity. Both leaders also sought security of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region and resolution of maritime issues based on international law. The fresh development of India managing and operating the security aspects in the Indian Ocean Island state of Seychelles assumes importance. This arrangement was agreed upon over the weekend and signed by outgoing foreign secretary S Jaishankar. It is in keeping with meeting India's challenges in ensuring security in the Indian Ocean.

Considering the regional power imbalance scenario thanks to a declining US and an assertive China, India and ASEAN appeared keen on forging a strategic partnership for regional peace and security. Tackling other issues like terrorism, human trafficking, cyber crime and piracy also provides opportunities for greater cooperation. With US disengagement in the region, New Delhi has to navigate carefully when nations are looking for options that promote economic interests along with ensuring territorial sovereignty.

ASEAN, therefore, assumes immense significance. It may be recalled that Singapore's elder statesman Lee Kuan Yew had held forth many years back that "India should be part of Southeast Asia's balance of forces and a counterweight to China" in the Indian Ocean. The ball is now in India's court as a reliable and strategic partner of ASEAN.

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Indonesia takes ownership of Indo-Pacific geopolitics: The Jakarta Post columnist

- Endy M. Bayuni

It's official. Indo-Pacific as a geopolitical concept has made it into Indonesia's foreign-policy lexicon. And Indonesia is already moving on to put its markers while most other nations in the region have still not caught on. Foreign Minister Retno LP Marsudi said Indonesia this year would deploy its diplomacy not only in the Asia-Pacific region, but also across the vast Indian Ocean. "Indonesia continues to fight to turn the Indian Ocean into a zone of peace, and to build a greater sense of regionalism around the ocean," Retno said in her annual foreign policy speech on Jan. 9. This is not exactly a pivot from the traditional way of looking at the region as strictly Asia-Pacific or East Asia, as some countries, including the United States under President Donald Trump have done. But this is the first time that the Indo-Pacific concept has been discussed at length in a foreign-policy statement. Indonesia, out of its own national interests, will pursue both regionalisms, through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean). "Amid the global and regional political changes, Southeast Asia, which is located at the crossroads between the Indian and Pacific oceans, must continue to remain a peaceful and open region. Indonesia, with other Asean nations, must be the main player in the establishment of any regional architecture," the minister said.

The role of Asean is important as the 50-year regional organization has been in the driver's seat when it comes to building regional structures, including the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) forum and the East Asia Summit. "Indonesia, with Asean, will continue to contribute to the strengthening of positive and inclusive cooperation, and not cooperation based on suspicions or even threat perceptions," the minister said. The Indo-Pacific concept originated from India, and Australia soon joined in as they sought to promote it as an alternative way of looking at the region, obviously for reasons strategic to their own interests. Indo-Pacific gained ground when President Trump used the term in all his speeches during his tour of Asia in November, avoiding "Asia Pacific" completely. China sees an American conspiracy in this shift as an attempt to weaken its influence in Asia. But make no mistake that Indonesia is not doing this to follow Trump's move, although the timing unfortunately may make it seem so. The Indo-Pacific concept is consistent with President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo's vision of building Indonesia as a maritime nation, even a maritime power some way down the road. In his debut at the East Asia Summit in Naypyidaw in 2014, Jokowi explained his idea of a global maritime fulcrum, saying Indonesia "must assert

itself as a force between two oceans: The Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean." Located at the centre where the two oceans meet, Indonesia, rather than Australia, which is at the fringe, is better placed to take the initiative in developing the regional concept. In other words, the Indo-Pacific concept is not likely to take off without Indonesia's endorsement or active role. Indonesia also controls four vital sea lanes of communication for international trade and shipping, namely the busy Malacca, Sunda, Lombok and Makassar straits, three of which link the Indian and Pacific oceans.

Indonesia has quietly started developing Indo-Pacific regionalism.

During its tenure as chair of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) last year, Indonesia hosted the group's first summit after 20 years of existence, and held no less than 30 meetings before handing over the baton to South Africa in November. The Jakarta Concord, issued at the summit in Jakarta, committed Indian Ocean nations to abide by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as the norm to preserve peace and stability in the region. During a meeting with visiting Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj this month, the two countries agreed to strengthen and deepen their strategic partnership for peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region. A new regional architecture is in the making, and Indonesia is already setting the tone, starting with confidence-building measures through dialogues. "The regional architecture will be best if built through a building-block approach," Retno said.

Source: www.straitstimes.com, 17 January 2018