



MAKING WAVES

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MARINE ENVIRONMENT



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Scientists warn microplastics pose massive threat to marine giants

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China carries out first run of unmanned vessel as it seeks to boost maritime security

- Teddy Ng

China has conducted the first run of an unmanned surface vehicle in its latest move to build up a blue-water navy that can support its maritime security. Military mouthpiece the *People's Liberation Army Daily* reported on Friday that the Huster-68 had successfully conducted the run last month in Dongguan, Guangdong province. The 6.8-metre vessel developed by Shenzhen Huazhong University of Science and Technology carried out a patrol around the Songmushan Reservoir and joined other unmanned surface vehicles in formations to encircle targets, the report said. "The development team used the run to work on difficulties stemming from weak communication signals and problems to do with keeping in formation with the other unmanned surface vehicles," it said.

The vessel is seen as an important part of protecting China's maritime interests, managing the use of water resources and achieving its ambition of becoming a blue-water navy that can operate globally, the university said in a statement on its website. China meanwhile unveiled what it said is the world's fastest unmanned vessel – with a maximum speed of more than 50 knots (92.6km/h) – last month at the All China Maritime Conference and Exhibition in Shanghai. The Tianxing-1 has a full-load displacement of 7.5 tonnes and its developer said it could be used for maritime law enforcement and as additional support for the navy. Collin Koh, a research fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies' Maritime Security Programme at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, said unmanned surface vehicles were useful both in peacetime and in war. In maritime law enforcement, they could be used to investigate at close range potentially dangerous situations at sea and allow for contact and responses to be made without putting personnel at risk. "In the South China Sea, the vehicles may even potentially become a point of harassment against foreign vessels," Koh said, adding that they could also be used to conduct saturation attacks and can be deployed in large numbers. Beijing-based naval expert Li Jie said the main functions of the Huster-68 were to search for, investigate and block targets at sea, but added that without knowing its maximum speed, it was difficult to assess how efficiently it could carry out those tasks.

He added that the *PLA Daily* highlighted the formation control of the vessels because they would be used to surround targets in different formations. But while China was at the cutting edge in its unmanned surface vehicle technology, Li said it was still behind the United States and Israel. “Taking the development of these vessels further could largely cut down costs as well as potential casualties during Chinese military patrols at sea,” Li said.

Source: www.scmp.com, 03 February 2018

ADECS 2018: ‘No naval arms race’ in Southeast Asia

It is ‘very hard to fit’ the Southeast Asian region into the definition of an arms race, according to discussions at the maritime security section of the ADECS 2018 conference in Singapore on 30-31 January. Wu Shang-Su, research fellow of the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) in Singapore, described Southeast Asia as a geographically diverse region in which a military confrontation is unlikely. Instead, what we are witnessing is merely a modernisation of naval fleets within ASEAN. Wu described it as a ‘multidirectional expansion in quantity and quality’. This modernisation of better-balanced navies is also heavily contingent on economic growth. Wu told the audience that navies are taking a balanced-fleet approach that offers ‘flexibility between peacetime and wartime functions, but more for the former’. The RSIS representative noted that one of the biggest changes in regional fleets is the addition of submarines . In 1991, when the Cold War ended, there were just two in ASEAN; now there are 14.

Nevertheless, submarines come with a high price tag and high operational and maintenance risks. Most countries have one, possibly two, submarine facilities, so it would be relatively easy to attack these to paralyse a nation’s underwater fleet. Landing platform docks (LPD) have also been acquired, although these are designed more for humanitarian assistance/disaster relief and transportation missions than true amphibious operations. There are 12 currently in service in ASEAN navies. Interestingly, shipbuilders in Indonesia and Singapore have been able to build them for domestic use and export. Meanwhile, major surface combatants have risen from 45 in 1991 to 99 in 2017, indicating that this remains a major aspiration for navies. However, heavily armed frigates are not so common within the region with no in-service class possessing more than six hulls. Furthermore, such warships have a low margin for damage or loss in wartime.

Wu concluded that regional navies are employing a hybrid strategy that may incorporate elements of sea control, sea denial and post-modern navies. This is because no single strategy is suitable for Southeast Asia. Consequently, some countries are putting more emphasis on nonconventional threats (e.g. anti-piracy, disaster relief, law enforcement), which may see them buying lighter-armed OPVs, for instance. Most navies have a very limited capacity to escalate a conflict because of their limited combatant numbers, plus they could quickly run out of imported munitions. Additionally, further development of navies is contingent on funds. Wu therefore foresees that 'the status quo of diverse capabilities will continue' for navies within the region.

Source: lss-sapu.com, 05 February 2018

Pathfinder Foundation, NMF host First dialogue on India-SL Maritime Security Cooperation

The first bi-lateral conference between the National Maritime Foundation (NMF) and Pathfinder Foundation (PF) will focus on developing a platform for analytical and innovative discussion, focusing specifically on Maritime Security and Maritime Domain Awareness covering the Indian Ocean, which would favourably impact on the countries in the Indian Ocean Region will be held on February 8, (today) at Cinnamon Grand Colombo. Admiral R.K. Dhowan with Directors of NMF, Admiral Jayanath Colombage, Director, Centre for Indo-Lanka Initiatives at PF with Chairman Bernard Goonetilleke and Directors will be key resource personalities of the conference.

The Indian Ocean Region which is home to nearly one-third of world's population is of high economic and strategic significance due to its location and traffic that passes through it. It is estimated that nearly half of world's containers, one third of bulk cargo traffic and two thirds of oil shipments pass through the Indian Ocean. Also, there is a shift in global economic weight and influence from Atlantic and Pacific oceans to the Indo-Asia-Pacific. The rise of China to number two position and India to number seven position in the world economic order is a clear example of this economic shift. With a growing population in India and already a large population in China, there will be a requirement for an increase in production and trade. Therefore, in the 21st century, the Indian Ocean has become the key ocean for energy, trade and food security.

Sri Lanka, although a small island state in the Southern tip of India, is seen as the epicentre of the Indian Ocean. Due to the geographical proximity of the two countries and the vital location in the Indian Ocean, it is quite logical that India and Sri Lanka jointly take the leadership in ensuring maritime security. There is a strong need to monitor the maritime domain with a view to detect and deter prospective threats, which can emanate from states or non-state actors. There may be a requirement to include other states such as Bangladesh, Mauritius and Seychelles in enhancing the MDA concept to cover the wider Indian Ocean. There is rationale to engage in academic discourse on maritime security and MDA in the Indian Ocean, with a view to develop a policy framework for the attention of policy makers in both the countries. Pathfinder Foundation together with the National Maritime Foundation, India has embarked on an initiative to conduct a first bilateral dialogue on India-Sri Lanka Maritime Security Cooperation in the Indian Ocean, Exploring Convergences. Admiral Dr. Jayanath Colombage, Director, Centre for Indo-Lanka Initiatives at PF and BaranaWaidyatillake from Lakshman Kadiragamar Institute will be the speakers from Sri Lanka. Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan, Director NMF and Capt. Gurpreet Khurana, Executive Director NMF will provide perspectives from India.

Source: dailynews.lk, 08 February 2018

Escape routes for pirates will be cut off

LAST Saturday, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte gave the green light for Malaysian and Indonesian vessels to enter Philippine waters in pursuit of pirates, kidnappers and militants. The clearance to enter our neighbours' waters is part of a trilateral maritime security agreement discussed by Malaysia's defence and foreign ministers with their Philippine and Indonesian counterparts. Eastern Sabah Security Command (Esscom) chief Hazani Ghazali welcomed this new development. The opening of the maritime borders between the three countries will cut the lag time between when a Malaysian vessel has to halt its pursuit at the border and when the neighbouring country continues the chase.

Before this, criminals and terrorists were able to seek refuge upon reaching Philippine waters because entry by foreign armed vessels without permission is an intrusion into the nation's sovereignty. Esscom oversees security in the Eastern Sabah Security Zone (Esszone), a special security area spanning some 1,700km of coastline in the east coast of Sabah. To boost the security of Esszone even further, vessels used by Esscom should

be able to outrun the fastest speedboats, or carry a high-speed helicopter on its deck, to drive fear into any intruders and inspire confidence for safe passage in the Sulu Sea. Crime or corruption occurs when perpetrators think they can get away with it, including snatch thieves on motorcycles, as it is common for many of them not to stop at red lights. Likewise, if the escape routes are cut off, it would not be just another day in the office for pirates, kidnappers and terrorists should they strike again.

Source: www.thestar.com, 02 February 2018

Nigeria's security strength in the Gulf of Guinea

- Dakuku Peterside

The problem of maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea is real. These statistics will paint the picture better: In 2016, the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) recorded 53 piracy attacks or attempted attacks in the Gulf of Guinea representing 28% of worldwide attacks— including 36 for Nigeria. The Gulf of Guinea accounted for more than 50% of the global kidnappings for ransom, with 34 seafarers kidnapped out of a total of 62 worldwide. The region is regarded as a high risk area attracting war insurance premium. It also recorded the maximum of piracy incidents which total 34 and occurred mostly in Nigeria. Angola had 5, Congo had 5, Benin had two, Togo had one and Ghana had only one incident. The picture is disheartening.

Last year, 10 incidents of kidnapping involving 65 crew members in or around Nigerian waters were reported. 36 cases of piracy with no vessels hijacked occurred in the Gulf of Guinea. Globally, 16 vessels reported being fired upon last year –including seven in the Gulf of Guinea. The fact that Nigeria is strategic in solving the maritime security issues in the Gulf of Guinea is not lost on the authorities. This is acknowledged in the global shipping industry. Being the biggest economy and most populous nation within the region and accounting for 65% of cargo generated within the region bring home the need for Nigeria to take the lead. Other factors, which put Nigeria in the forefront of the fight, include the facts that: 65% of cargo coming into Gulf of Guinea end up in Nigeria; it accounts for 50% – 60% major maritime security incidences that occur in the Gulf of Guinea; it has the highest military contingent and might within the region; it has huge deposit of oil and gas making it a place of interest for international energy dynamics; and Nigeria has one of the largest delta areas of the world characterised by thousands of creeks. For these reasons, therefore, Nigeria is pivotal

to the security and stability of the Gulf of Guinea. We also realise the fact that maritime insecurity has economic, social and environment implications in the GoG Region. On the economic front, it leads to loss of oil revenue to illegal local/international cartel. There is threat to commerce as 90% of the external trade in the region depends on shipping and this endangers the growth of the local economy.

The Gulf of Guinea is a shipping transit hub thus remains under threat. This threat also leads to inability to meet the needs of the masses because of the region dependence on imported goods and export of raw materials and natural resources. The fishing industry which supports the GDP of the region is also affected. Between January 2016 and December 2017 nine vessels were arrested for illegal fishing on Nigeria's territorial waters. The social sides include: arms and drug smuggling and human trafficking. It is empirically proven that there is a correlation between maritime insecurity, growing unemployment and youth restiveness in the region. Also, we can't divorce it from inter-communal conflicts and dislocation of communities. There is also agitation by seemingly marginalised sub-region within the regions constitute security risks, the Niger delta area of Nigeria being a classical case. The environment also suffers in terms of destruction and pollution of the marine ecosystem leading to loss of livelihood. Between January 2015 and December 2017 1446 illegal refineries were destroyed, 95 barges stealing crude and several wooden boats were destroyed with attendant consequences on the Environment.

In response to this challenge, Nigeria has come up with multi-dimensional interventions, which include a review of local and international laws concerning maritime crime. This is ongoing. NIMASA is currently pushing for the enactment of the anti-piracy law. When passed to law by the National Assembly of Nigeria, the country will be the first in the region to have a dedicated anti-piracy law. Working with the Nigeria federal ministry of justice and Nigerian Navy we have developed the Harmonised Standard Operating Procedure for arrest and detention of vessels involved in illegal activities. There is also a joint initiative by the ministries of transportation and defence to strengthen response capabilities of the military through the deep BLUE PROJECT to be executed by NIMASA. We must not forget the presidential intervention on maritime security through building of regional coalition and corporation. NIMASA recently signed an MOU with Ghana maritime Authority and SIERRA Lone maritime Authority to further strengthens regional collaboration.

Other steps taken by our maritime administration to ensure our maritime domain is safe for business includes but not limited to ;Establishment and implementation of the

ISPS Code; effective enforcement of Port and Flag State Control; an MOU with the Nigerian Navy and Air force to increase response capacity; FEC has approved the acquisition of special mission aircrafts, helicopters and vessels with communication equipment; capacity building programme by Ministry of Transportation and NIMASA; and Operation Prosperity by the NIMASA/Nigerian Navy. We are also acquiring assets to ensure maritime safety. These include C4i (Command, Control, Communication, Computers and Intelligence); integration of our maritime domain awareness asset with FALCON EYE of Nigerian Navy (Over the Horizon Radar System); aircrafts and vessels with communication equipment; two Special Mission Aircrafts; three Special Mission Helicopters; two Special Mission Vessels; four units of UAVs; and 17 Fast Patrol Boats. The country has also strategically intervened in the GoG region by leading the establishment of ECOWAS Integrated Maritime Security Strategy (EIMS); establishment of Inter-Regional Coordination Center (ICC) in Younde Cameroon, an initiative of ECOWAS/ECCAS/GoG Commission; the establishment of African Integrated Maritime Security Strategy (AIMS); leading ZONE E multinational maritime security outfit in Cotonou (4 nations standing maritime security outfit); active in Cote d'ivoire based Maritime Organization of West and Central Africa (MOWCA); coordinating Heads of Navies of the region; and housing one of the five designated Regional Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres in Africa (RMRCC). Other Interventions that have also come into play are ratification and domestication of relevant International Treaties Safety, Security and Marine Environment Management, ratification of thirty-five IMO Conventions/ Protocols, including the ILO MLC 2006, gazetting of about thirty-four maritime Regulations pursuant to the Merchant Shipping Act 2007 and the Nigeria Maritime Administration and Safety Agency Act 2007; and domestication of 12 relevant maritime safety conventions of the IMO which are necessary for ensuring regional maritime security and safety. Of course, we set forth at dawn by installing satellite surveillance systems, Coastal Radar systems, and the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System GMDSS amongst others. The Anti-Piracy bill which is currently undergoing legislative procedures is aimed at criminalizing piracy and all maritime crimes in the country's maritime domain with attendant punishment enshrined in the Nigerian legal framework.

The implementation of an Integrated National Surveillance and Waterways Protection Solution with command and control infrastructure in at our agency is part of Nigerian government deep blue contract to enhance security in the Gulf of Guinea. Most importantly is that our deep blue Project fits into NIMASA's Total spectrum maritime security strategy which is built on four pillars of situational awareness, response capability, law enforcement and regional cooperation. The deliverables from the deep

blue project are expected to bolster Nigeria's maritime security architecture and increase monitoring and compliance enforcement within the Nigerian waters and its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The fact that the Nigerian Navy has stepped up its activities in the Nigerian creeks which has seen the figures of illegal refineries destroyed rise exponentially from 97 in 2015 to over 1221 in 2017 is a big step forward. Significantly, eight relevant conventions and protocols on marine environment have also been domesticated in order to ensure a clean marine environment. Efforts are being made by the Safety Administration through the Federal Ministry of Transportation for the domestication of other ratified Conventions.

For further development, we look forward to having improved profiling capacity and information sharing on maritime criminality and illegality, enhanced Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) and surface/air patrol capabilities, functional legal framework, skill development of Maritime Law Enforcement Agents (MLEAs), integration of national inter-agency efforts, adoption of a broadened concept of security to harmonise the pursuit of security outcomes, with external players approaching security cooperation transparently and inclusively and employment of good governance as an element of security and an enabler of durable security outcomes.

We trust that continuous collaboration amongst partners across our continent, improved profiling and information sharing on maritime criminality and illegality, enhanced maritime domain awareness and surface to air patrol capabilities, functional legal framework, integration of national inter-agency efforts, youth empowerment programmes amongst others are factors that can help bring solutions to the issues surrounding insecurity in the maritime space.

Source: www.thecable.ng, 01 February 2018

Redefining Maritime Security

- Ramesh Davesar

Maritime challenges impact our national security and, therefore, must be addressed with all sincerity. India needs to re-evaluate its security concerns to march towards being a major power. While to other countries, the Indian Ocean is one of the important oceanic areas; to India, it is a vital sea, its lifelines are concentrated in that

area and its freedom is dependent on the freedom of that water surface”, said KM Pannikar. The continuation of ongoing global hegemonic developments, coupled with recent activities in and around have made the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) the epicentre of geo-political arena, having direct bearing on 21 Littorals in general, and India in particular, whose security and economic interests are directly linked to keep the Indian Ocean (IO) free from military activities of the super/regional powers. Before proceeding further, it is pertinent to mention an incidental literary development, which subsequently became a precursor to the politico-strategic tool, to impose hegemony over others. In 1990, Joseph Nye of the Harvard University coined a term called ‘soft power’ in his book, *Bound To Lead: The Changing Nature Of American Power*, where he stated, “Soft power is the ability to attract and co-opt, rather than by coercion (hard power), which is using force or giving money as a means of persuasion. Soft power is the ability to shape the preferences of others through appeal and attraction”.

Taking cue, it was China who took the lead to strategise this thought into the ‘soft power doctrine’ and launched it in the IOR, that culminated into virtually dominating and chocking the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) by setting up the String of Pearls (SOP), stretching from the Coco Islands in the east up to Djibouti in the west and further buttressed by dolling economic aid of \$1.1 billion to Sri Lanka; free trade agreement with Maldives; and the \$10 billion oil pipeline project in Kyauk Pyu Port in Myanmar. Further, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) worth one trillion dollar and its sister project One Belt-One Road (OBOR) have not only tilted the regional equation but have also thrown fresh security challenges to us.

Meanwhile, the United States has been supporting the South China Sea (SCS) littorals’ claim and is also seeking effective and greater role by India. Above all, enlarging the regional geo political template from erstwhile Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific region provide us a window of opportunity to not only reassert our global role but also effectively counter the Chinese regional expansionism. In a tectonic shift, the US has put direct onus on Pakistan of supporting regional terrorism and stopping \$255 million. This indicates a foreseeable Indo-US strategic cooperation in the coming years.

Under these fast changing and unpredictable geo-political environs, we need to re-evaluate our maritime concerns to ensure that we not only meet these challenges successfully, but also safeguard our national interests. I believe that our maritime security must be a cumulative manifestation of: One, protection of Exclusive Economic

Zone and the merchant fleet. Two, security of offshore installations. Three, defence of island territories. And most importantly, project our strategic influence in the IOR, extending from Thailand, Indonesia, Mauritius to the Gulf of Aden. In order to achieve this, we need to exercise both the soft power and military options. Foremost, the Indo-Pacific Region is of strategic importance to our economic growth and can play a vital role to kick start our recently launched 'Blue Economy Initiatives' (use of marine resources for sustainable economic development). We must, therefore, tap its potential to catalyse the Niti Aayog's vision to achieve the \$10 trillion economy target by 2032.

In the meantime, our sustained initiatives launched during the last couple of years have yielded crucial inroads in the IOR; inauguration of the first phase of Chabahar Port in Iran, concluding a defence contract in close vicinity of Chinese sponsored Hambantota Port in Srilanka and the historic detente in the Indo-Maldives relations with the latter putting 'India First' in its diplomatic priorities are cases in point.

Similarly, our efforts must also focus to neutralise Chinese influence in the far-East. The 'India-Africa Forum Summit' with 14 African countries launched in 2008, is an ideal forum to enhance our economic-military strides and must be vigorously pursued to consolidate our initiatives. Another aspect that we have somehow failed to encash is Naval diplomacy — it is a well-known reality that the Indian Navy has been extending timely and crucial political and economic support/help in our neighbourhood, which must continue to expand our regional influence.

Rechristening of the erstwhile 'Look East' to 'Act East Policy' albeit, a belated step, is making steady inroads. The year 2017 was a landmark year when we celebrated 25 years of dialogue; 15 years of summit level meetings; and five years of strategic partnership with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean). Overall improvement and regional grouping, leading to the free trade agreement with Asean, is the direct outcome of active pursuance of our Act East Policy, which has culminated to their Heads being the combined state guests this Republic Day. Further, in order to check the Chinese expansionist manoeuvre, both in the South and the East China Seas, we must not restrict to just extending the overt support to the sovereignty of the Littoral states but also enhance sustained diplomatic, exploratory and military cooperation.

Recently, an international study concluded that the next decade would see India along with Japan, Vietnam, Taiwan and Philippines, emerging as the prominent military

powers in the regional horizon. Conversely, if we look at the present status and snail's mentality in modernisation of our Armed Forces, there is lot to be done to justify this prediction. Also, there is gross mismatch in our perceived aim and existing capabilities, which are woefully inadequate.

Truly speaking, we need to sail many knots to claim the 'Blue Water' capability. Let us analyse our current status in the IOR. Strategically, we just have notional military presence in the form of three Listening Posts (LPs). However, the recent acquisition of an island on lease from Mauritius and now Seychelles allowing India to establish military infrastructures, will improve our woeful presence to some extent. This is just the tip of the iceberg. We need to dominate the entire stretch of SLOC. We must promote all-weather regional military cooperation among the Indo Pacific nations. Additionally, in a step-up development, the historic quadrilateral New Delhi conclave of Naval chiefs from India, US, Australia and Japan, on January 18, pushed for a new regional security architecture to face up to China's aggressive designs. We must plan the re-organisation of our fleet but definitely not repeating the folly of prematurely aborting the 'Revolution of Naval Affairs Project' in 2010. We must redux our reorganisation efforts to achieve the 'Blue Water punch' in the next decade. In order to fully counter the anti access/area denial capabilities of our adversaries as also to play envisioned role in the Indo-Pacific region, apart from complete overhauling our sub-sea capabilities, we must strive to acquire four aircraft carrier Battle Groups ie, one each for the three fleets and a backup for strategic missions. Maritime challenges abundantly impact our national security, which must be addressed with all sincerity. I must add that the current asymmetric equation has the potential of being 'Kargil in Sea.

Source: www.dailypioneer.com, 09 February 2018

NATO Defence Ministers take decisions to strengthen the Alliance

NATO Defence Ministers wrapped up two days of talks in Brussels on Thursday (15 February 2018), focused on the NATO Command Structure, fair burden-sharing and the Alliance's efforts to project stability beyond its borders.

On Wednesday, ministers took decisions to modernise the NATO Command Structure, in response to a changed security environment. The adapted Command Structure will place a greater focus on maritime security, logistics and military mobility, and cyber defence. Ministers agreed to establish a new Joint Force Command for the Atlantic, to

help protect sea lines of communication between North America and Europe, as well as a new support Command for logistics, reinforcement and military mobility. In June, Defence Ministers will decide on the required timelines, locations and increased staff levels.

Burden-sharing was also a key topic of discussion. Ministers took stock of progress in implementing NATO's Defence Investment Pledge. By 2024, 15 Allies are expected to spend 2% of their GDP or more on defence. *"We are moving in the right direction, and I look forward to even more progress in the years ahead,"* said Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.

Later, Ministers were joined by EU High Representative Federica Mogherini and representatives from Finland and Sweden for a discussion on NATO-EU cooperation. *"We are committed to stepping up our cooperation on military mobility, cyber defence and in countering terrorist threats,"* said Mr. Stoltenberg. Allies also addressed recent EU decisions on defence and how to ensure their complementary with NATO's efforts.

On Thursday, Ministers discussed NATO's role in projecting stability and fighting terrorism. Allies agreed to start planning for a NATO training mission in Iraq, at the request of the Iraqi government and the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. A mission will make current training efforts more sustainable, with better resourcing and a well-established process for Allies to contribute forces. *"We will also plan to help the Iraqi forces become increasingly professional by establishing specialist military academies and schools,"* said Mr. Stoltenberg. As part of their discussions, Allies also considered NATO's other priorities in the South. *"We agreed that we need to improve our ability to react to future crises in the region, including with enhanced planning and exercises,"* said the Secretary General.

Source: www.nato.int, 15 February 2018



RN amphibious assault ship HMS Albion deploying for first time in seven years

After spending four years in mothballs and another two undergoing a £90m refit, the Royal Navy's amphibious assault ship HMS Albion is deploying early next week to become the flagship of NATO's Standing Maritime Group 2. "It is a huge privilege for us to fly the flag of the NATO task group commander in such a high profile deployment," Captain Tim Neild, HMS Albion commanding officer, said. "This symbolises the importance that the UK and the Royal Navy places on our role in NATO and in assuring the collective defence and security of NATO allies and partners." Over the coming months, HMS Albion will undertake presence and security operations as well as conducting multi-national exercises aimed at increasing the way the navies of the task group work together. HMS Albion officially returned to the fleet in July 2017, in a rededication ceremony attended by Princess Anne.

In late 2011 the ship was placed at extended readiness, following the decision by the UK government in the Strategic Defence and Security Review to operate only one of two amphibious ships at a time. In 2015 Babcock Marine began work on the ship's rejuvenation. In one of Devonport's largest dry-docks Albion rested temporarily whilst her hull was inspected, and major invasive structural work and re-preservation of the paint scheme was undertaken. The ship received an improved radar, a new command system and the Phalanx close-in weapons system.

Source: navaltoday.com, 02 february 2018

Submarine detection a rude awakening for Sino-Japan relations

A Chinese submarine was recently detected in the contiguous zone around the Japan-administered Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea. The incident raised concerns on both sides. Japan was made aware that China is fully intent on continuing its maritime expansion while nominally working to improve ties with Japan. China, on its side, is facing domestic criticism for being easily detected by Japanese sonars. In the afternoon of Jan. 10, a Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force P-3C patrol plane dropped a sonar buoy into waters near Miyako Island in Okinawa Prefecture after spotting a submarine cruising underwater in a north-westerly direction. The device

detected the sound of the submarine's engine and the MSDF destroyer Onami began tailing it. On Jan. 12, it was confirmed that the vessel belonged to the Chinese Navy. This marks the first recorded presence of a Chinese submarine in the waters. The vessel cruised in the direction of the uninhabited Senkaku Islands, which have long been a source of friction between Japan and China. Beijing claims the islands and calls them Diaoyu. Another destroyer, the Oyodo, joined the Onami in following the submarine, which proceeded to enter the islands' contiguous zone in the morning of Jan. 11. The MSDF warned the submarine that it had entered the zone, but received no response. When the Japanese destroyers made their way into the zone, they were followed by a Chinese frigate that had been sailing nearby. The two Chinese vessels moved out of the contiguous zone a few hours later, with the submarine, identified as a Shang-class nuclear-powered attack submarine, resurfacing in the East China Sea on Jan. 12 and sailing under a Chinese flag. "Is China's nuclear attack submarine too easy to detect?" the South China Morning Post wrote in an opinion piece on Jan 28. "The early and long exposure of its underwater trajectory, according to military experts, suggests the vessel is not as quiet as it should be," the paper wrote.

Source:

Royal Navy's new small survey vessel will be called HMS Magpie

A new Royal Navy small survey vessel that will replace the recently decommissioned HMSML Gleaner will be named HMS Magpie, Royal Navy First Sea Lord Admiral Philip Jones announced. The last HMS Magpie was commanded by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh in Malta in the early 1950s. Motor Survey launch Magpie will be charting ports and estuaries around Britain, as her predecessor HM Survey Motor Launch Gleaner had been doing for 35 years. Magpie is currently being built at Safehaven Marine as part of a £48 million contract under which the Royal Navy will receive up to 38 new workboats, ranging in size from 11 to 18 meters.

The future HMSML Magpie will be the longest; an 18-meter twin deck catamaran based on Safehaven's Wildcat 60 design. According to company specifications, the Wildcat 60 has a 33,000kg lightship displacement and a loaded displacement of 37,000kg. It is purposely designed for ocean research and hydrographic survey and is capable of operating offshore for 7 days with 12 crew. Powered by twin Volvo D16 engines, the vessel has a 23kts maximum speed and a 1,400 nautical mile range at displacement survey speeds of 8-9kts.

Source:navaltoday.com, 02 February 2018

Naval Group launches sixth French Navy FREMM frigate Normandie

French shipbuilder Naval Group on February 1 launched the French Navy's sixth FREMM frigate 'Normandie'. The shipbuilder floated out its overall eight FREMM vessel 12 months after the start of hull assembly in the building dock on the Lorient site. This launch brought the company a step closer to the milestone of delivering six anti-submarine FREMMs to the French Navy by 2019, as set out in the French Military Programming Law 2014-2019. Normandie is set to leave the dock in autumn to undergo its first sea trials before delivery to the French Navy, foreseen in summer 2019. Six FREMM frigates were already delivered between 2012 and 2017. The Aquitaine in 2012, the Provence in 2015, the Languedoc in 2016 and last but not least the Auvergne in April 2017. On the international market, Morocco took delivery of the Mohammed VI in 2014 and Egypt took delivery of the Tahya Misr in 2015.

The FREMM Bretagne, floated in September 2016, will be transferred to Brest, where it will be based, in the second quarter 2018. The two final frigates, Alsace and Lorraine, will be delivered to the French Navy before the end of 2022, according to Naval Group. These frigates will be equipped with strengthened air defense capacities. The assembly of the FREMM Alsace in the Lorient building dock will start in spring 2018. FREMM frigates are built within the international Italian-French program, coordinated by OCCAR (the Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation). Italy is building four anti-submarine warfare (ASW) and six general-purpose variants, while France will have six ASW and two anti-air warfare variants. The 142-meter long ships are equipped with the Aster and Exocet MM 40 missiles and the MU 90 torpedoes. They can reach maximum speeds of 27 knots and have a range of 6,000 miles at a speed of 15 knots. The ships can be operated by a crew of 108, with the helicopter detachment included.

Source: navaltoday.com, 02 February 2018

Project 945A Sierra II Class Submarine Pskov has Faulty Auxiliary Engine Replaced

The Project 945A B-336 Sierra II class nuclear-powered attack submarine (SSN) *Pskov* armed with missiles and torpedoes had its faulty auxiliary diesel engine replaced with a standby one, the Northern fleet told FlotProm online publication. "The Pskov nuclear submarine is successfully fulfilling its missions within an underwater formation of the fleet. The faulty diesel engine was replaced by a stand-by one," fleet

spokesman Vadim Serga said. The M-580 diesel engine (factory number 9503-11) collapsed after repairs at Zvezda enterprise in St. Petersburg. It operated for 26 hours at Zvezda and another three hours at Nerpa shipyard which maintained the Pskov in 2011-2015. The engine collapsed after that with numerous faults. At present the Zvezda and the Nerpa are establishing who of them is to blame for the three-year old breakdown. The collapsed M-580 diesel engine has not been repaired so far.

About Project 945A

The Project 945A nuclear-powered submarine is designed to conduct operations against submarines and surface ships independently, launch cruise missiles to attack ground targets and provide antisubmarine defense for formations and convoys. The Project 945A submarine has been developed on the basis of the Project 945 Barracuda-class nuclear-powered submarine armed with missiles and torpedoes. The Project 945A nuclear-powered submarine is the sole submarine in the world with a titanium hull, which reduces its radar signature considerably. The Project 945A nuclear-powered submarine has an underwater displacement of 8,500 tons, a length of 110 meters, a full underwater speed of 35 knots and an operational submersion depth of 500 meters. The Project 945A nuclear-powered submarine is armed with six 533mm torpedo-launching tubes with an ammunition load comprising 40 missiles and torpedoes. The submarine's crew totals 61.

Source: www.navyrecognition.com, 02 February 2018

Panel: Navy and Coast Guard Operating More in a Maritime 'Grey Zone'

- Ben Werner

SAN DIEGO, Calif. — Between war and peace is the grey zone – a legal status where the rules of engagement aren't always clear for the Navy and Coast Guard forces increasingly operating there, according to top commanders from the services. The Navy and Coast Guard are tasked with protecting the trade and sovereign interests of both the U.S. friends and allies. But, without a clearly identified mission and clearly articulated and supporting rules of engagement, it's difficult for ship commanders to determine threat levels and follow an acceptable course of action, said Vice Adm. John Alexander, the commander of U.S. 3rd Fleet. Alexander was part of a panel of admirals and a former ambassador at the WEST 2018 conference discussing grey zone operations.

“It’s an asymmetric warfare and the Navy is no stranger to this,” Alexander said. The problem for Navy and Coast Guard ship commanders is separating peaceful fishing fleet or commercial marine traffic from ships operated by an adversary. Ship commanders have a short window of time to determine intent when suddenly facing such questions as who are they facing and what is an appropriate use of the military might at their disposal. Ships from most navies generally follow the same operational norms as those used by the U.S. Navy. The panel agreed commanders on both sides generally know where the grey zone ends and conflict begins. Some countries are just more apt to operate right up to the edge dividing grey from conflict. But defining the grey zone itself can be tricky. Not every country has the same idea of where conflict begins, said panelist Nina Hachigian, former U.S. Ambassador to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Alexander said, “What is the grey zone? I kind of view it as non-state actors executing state security objectives and utilizing the ambiguity that they have to make it hard to respond.” China, for example, often operates right at the grey zone’s edge, panelist Vice Adm. Fred Midgette, the U.S. Coast Guard’s Pacific Area Commander. The nation is building-up the size of its coast guard fleet and claiming territory at sea. The reason is to project its force and impose its national will on international arenas.

Countering China’s influence in the region is very complicated. China’s cooperation is a central part of U.S. efforts to restrain North Korea’s nuclear program and the nation is a major trade partner for neighboring countries and the U.S., Hachigian said. Yet China also on occasion acts in a way that doesn’t respect international norms, Alexander said. He pointed to China’s attempt to spread its international waters, and fisheries, by building islands. Pouring sand on a low-tide elevation doesn’t necessarily create a habitable location, he said. Diplomatically, though, when trying to counter such actions, the U.S. is hampered by not having signed the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Hachigian said. The U.S. follows the convention, but by not being a signatory, loses some moral standing when confronting other nations who have signed the treaty. The result is different countries will look at the same scenario differently. “So, we didn’t ratify it; we follow the rules. China signed the damned thing; they don’t follow the rules,” Alexander said. “So who’s more right in this argument?”

Source: news.usni.org, 09 February 2018

'Disaster for the Navy': Germany 'running out' of warships

A German defense official warned the country's navy is running out of combat-capable vessels & will be unable to deploy overseas. He said that several frigates & auxiliary ships were already decommissioned due to their age. "The Navy is running out of deployment-capable ships," Hans-Peter Bartels, chief of the German parliament's defense committee, told the Bild am Sonntag newspaper. He said that the problem has snowballed over time, because old ships were taken out of service but no replacement vessels were provided.

Bartels, an influential Social Democratic Party (SPD) MP, said that six out of fifteen frigates were already decommissioned, adding that "*none of the new Type-125 frigates are able to join the navy.*" Auxiliary ships suffered the same fate, with two German Navy replenishment vessels, 'Berlin' and 'Bonn', being sent for a 1.5-year refit. He also said the situation is dire because of bureaucracy in the defense agencies as well as military contractors' reluctance to supply necessary spare parts on time. According to Bartels, the Navy has to wait for five months to receive fuel injection pumps or six months to take delivery of oil coolers for its frigates.

The shortage of ships will eventually affect Germany's capability to project power overseas, he stated. "There would be no new maritime missions for NATO, the EU or the UN anymore," Bartels went on to say. This is not the first time the poor condition of the German Navy has come into the spotlight. Last year, local media reported that the Navy was effectively left without its entire submarine fleet, after all the U-boats were either put on maintenance or disabled due to desperate need of repair. The German Navy lost the last of its submarines in October when the newest Type 212A vessel suffered serious damage to its rudder after hitting a rock during a submerging maneuver off the Norwegian coast. The rest of the submarine fleet, it turned out, was already out of service by that time. Two Type 212A submarines are undergoing scheduled maintenance and will be ready for service no sooner than in the second half of 2018, while another two suffered some damage and are in an urgent need of repair, with no estimated time of completion available. "This a real disaster for the navy," *Bartels said at the time, before adding:* "It is the first time in history that none [of the U-boats] will be operational for months."

Source: www.rt.com, 12 February 2018

Govt Mulls Allowing Foreign Vessels in Coastal Waters to Boost Shipping Industry

New Delhi: The government is considering a proposal to permit foreign vessels to operate in Indian coastal waters with a view to reduce logistics cost, enhance port efficiency and boost domestic shipping industry, an official said. The move would facilitate transportation of cargo between different ports along the country's coastline. Currently, the Cabotage rules, which governs this activity, makes it difficult for foreign flagged vessels to handle cargo between two domestic ports.

So far, the cabotage policy in the country give first preference to Indian flagships over cargo and foreign vessels. Cargo and foreign ships were allowed only when no suitable Indian flag vessel is available for the same. Ministries including shipping and commerce are working on the proposal, the official said adding the move would also help cut shipping rates and transportation time. According to traders, there is a scarcity of Indian mainline vessels in the country and it impacts smooth movement of cargo and consignments. Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) Director General Ajay Sahai said that these norms should be relaxed as it will increase competition among ports and improve their efficiency to handle consignments. "The government relax these rules on case to case basis, which is a temporary measure. It needs to liberalised to cut logistics costs as well," Sahai added. States including Gujarat, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh too have asked for relaxation in the norms. "We have received a proposal to liberalise the existing Cabotage rules to allow foreign vessels operate in Indian coastal waters. Concerned ministries are working whether the rules needs to be relaxed or not," the official said. Besides textiles and commerce ministries, Container Shipping Lines Association (India), Indian Private Ports & Terminals Association are in favour of liberalising the rules. However, the Indian National Shipping Association is not in favour of this liberalisation. Indian traders use Colombo, Salalah (Oman), Singapore and Dubai hubs for shipments, adding to their costs. At present, about 60 per cent of India's exports and imports containers are transshipped through ports like Singapore and Colombo. This trans-shipment through ports outside the country involves not only huge expenditure but also extra 7-10 days of transit time. India has 12 major ports which fall under the Centre's jurisdiction and about 200 non-major ports under the

control of states. The main ports include Kandla, Mumbai, JNPT, Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd and Gujarat Pipavav Port.

Source: www.news18.com, 14 February 2018

Russian ports impose stricter ice class restrictions on tankers

Three key Russian ports in the Gulf of Finland are set to expand ice class restrictions later in February as ice keeps building in the region, according to a Russian shipping agent Wednesday. Ice class restrictions have meant that freight rates in the Baltic have been pushed higher in the past weeks as charterers have fewer appropriate vessels to choose from, leaving the Handysize Baltic-UK Continent route for 30,000 mt cargoes at a 13-month high. The port of St Petersburg will from February 24 demand approaching tankers have ice class 1D or higher to navigate by own power, while those without any ice class will still be able to navigate with ice breaker assistance. The same restrictions were imposed for the port of Ust-Luga on February 10.

The port of Vyborg has a ban on vessels with no ice class from February 21, while those with class 1D or higher will need ice breaker assistance, and only those with 1C or higher are allowed to navigate by own power. The port of Vysotsk will impose the same restrictions as Vyborg on February 22, and Primorsk have have the same rules as Vysotsk and Vyborg in place since January 26. One broker said the new restrictions probably wouldn't affect the market much as the majority of Handysize tankers in the area have ice class 1B, and only three or four have 1C.

Source: www.platts.com, 14 february 2018

Philadelphia Port gets an ultra-large visitor: Its biggest container ship ever

- Andrew Maykuth

The Port of Philadelphia on Tuesday took measure of the largest container ship to ever dock at its wharves, the 1,083-foot-long MSC Shuba B, bearing a cargo primarily of South American produce. The ship, which was commissioned last year, is almost as long as a Nimitz-class aircraft carrier but is longer than the height of the Comcast

Center (though a few feet shy of the new Comcast Technology Center). The operator lists the ship's capacity at 12,238 TEUs (20-foot-equivalent units, the standard size of international containers). It is part of a new generation of ultra-large container vessels sized to sail through the expanded Panama Canal, and a big reason why PhilaPort expects to set new records this year for cargo at its enlarged Packer Avenue Marine Terminal. "It's a sign of more good things to come," said Sean E. Mahoney, PhilaPort spokesman. The vessel, which was loaded in Chilean and Peruvian ports, took 10 days to sail from Callao, Peru, and was set to discharge a total of about 500 containers in Philadelphia, including 340 refrigerated boxes containing table grapes, nectarines, plums, pears, and the last part of the South American blueberry crop.

The perishable produce will be quickly loaded onto trucks and distributed through the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, and even into Canada. The ship will continue its voyage on to Northern Europe. The Port Authority is strengthening ship berths at the Packer Avenue Marine Terminal to accommodate next month's scheduled arrival of two new harbor cranes, which are tall enough and extend far enough to reach across the full width of such ships as the MSC Shuba B, which has a breadth of 158 feet. It won't be the first such vessel to call at Philadelphia. Mediterranean Shipping Co. (MSC) has weekly sailings of large vessels to transport produce from Peru to Philadelphia during the northern hemisphere's winter (when it is summer in South America). MSC commissioned the ship from owner Seaspan Corp. for 17 years, after which MSC takes ownership. It is part of a fleet of identical vessels built by Korean shipbuilder Hanjin Heavy Industries & Construction in the Philippines.

Source: www.philly.com, 14 February 2018

China's One Belt, One Road China's One Belt, One Road Initiative Reaches European Ports

-Jack Wood

Chinese megacorporation COSCO Shipping Ports Limited signed a deal on January 22 with Brussel's Port Zeebrugge for control of its massive shipping terminal. The deal gives COSCO full rights to design, develop, finance, construct, own, operate and maintain the second-largest port in Belgium. The natural, deep-water harbor is an excellent location for trade. According to Port Finance International, "Zeebrugge is close to Hamburg and Le Havre and is within a short distance of Great Britain. The

terminal has a good network of road and rail connections to all countries of Continental Europe, and to other ports in Northwest, Central and Eastern Europe.”

The acquisition of Zeebrugge Port is part of a growing trend of Chinese expansion in Europe. Following the European financial crisis, the Continent was left reeling with an estimated \$430 billion investment gap. Sensing opportunity, China proposed heavy investment in European businesses and infrastructure. The strapped-for-cash countries of the eurozone happily agreed to take Chinese money and thus began rebuilding a powerful trade network not seen in centuries: the Great Silk Road. No longer content with his country’s gradual rise, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced last October that the time had come for China to take center stage on the world scene. His plan to achieve this goal includes the One Belt, One Road project. A 2016 *Trumpet* magazine article, “All Roads Lead to Beijing,” explained how China is expanding its economic influence and reestablishing strong trade routes with Europe. The country aims to spend over \$1 trillion on overland and maritime infrastructure, including rail, road and pipeline projects. “If China’s plans for the Silk Road works out, this relationship is just beginning. China currently transports the equivalent of 7,500 shipping containers by rail each year. Some predict this will rise to 7.5 million by 2020” (ibid).

The purchase of European port facilities is adding tremendous weight to the One Belt, One Road initiative. *Foreign Policy* magazine explained that a host of acquisitions around Europe puts China on the path to global economic dominion. “Chinese state firms, which once kept close to their home market, now control about one 10th of all European port capacity.” The growth of this powerful economic connection between China and Europe has been on the *Trumpet’s* radar for years, thanks to Bible prophecy. “The Bible clearly prophesies the rise of this new economic system. Isaiah 23:3 describes a ‘mart of nations,’ a trading bloc that allows merchants to grow rich” (op cit). The Bible also shows that members of this “mart of nations” include Europe and China. For an in-depth look at these incredible prophecies, please read “All Roads Lead to Beijing.”

Source: www.thetrumpet.com, 14 February 2018

Better port ecosystem to help boost India's ease of doing business ranking: report

- Jyotika Sood

New Delhi: To achieve the ambitious target of having a 5% share in world exports and climb up the ranks in ease of doing business, India needs to address its port ecosystem, says a report commissioned by government think tank Niti Aayog. The report says that processes and operations across India's ports are not standardized or uniform, costs and time for key processes are unpredictable and there is an unacceptable level of variation across ports as well as within ports. It listed five issues—port congestion, custom clearance, shipping line issues and charges, documentation and paperwork and regulatory clearances—as the major hurdles leading to detention and demurrage challenges faced by traders in. The study, Port Logistics: Issues and Challenges in India, undertaken by advisory firm Dun & Bradstreet (DNB) on behalf of Niti Aayog identifies the major problems faced on the ground by the end-users of ports—exporters, importers and freight forwarders. It also ranked 13 major ports and one non-major port on a Port Performance Index. It rated four ports (Mundra, JNPT, Kamarajar, Vizag) as good; seven (Cochin, Kandla, Paradip, Chennai, Mormugao, New Mangalore and VOC) as average and three (Haldia, Kolkata and MbPT) as poor.

The report comes at a time when major ports in India have been witnessing a good growth. As per the shipping ministry's latest figures, the major ports in India have recorded a growth of 4.58%, handling 560.97 million tonnes of cargo during from April 2017 to January 2018 as against 536.41 million tonnes during April 2016 to January 2017. Manish Sinha, managing director of Dun and Bradstreet – India said, “To increase India's share in world exports, we need to strengthen India's industrial sector and increase its product competitiveness. And to enhance product competitiveness, we would have to improve the infrastructure for trade. Ports are a key part of trade infrastructure.” He added that if the issues of the report are resolved in a set time-frame, it would further facilitate ease of doing trade in India. While the DNB report emphasises strengthening port infrastructure, the shipping ministry is undertaking an ambitious Sagarmala project to promote port-led development. Under Sagarmala, the ministry aspires to reduce logistics costs for EXIM and domestic cargo leading to overall cost savings of Rs35,000 to 40,000 crore per annum.

A shipping ministry official on condition of anonymity said, “We were not aware about the Niti Aayog's report. The ministry had earlier appointed an advisor and has been already introducing several changes suggested by them for ease of doing business.” These included exclusion of services of transportation of import cargo by ships on

voyage charter from negative list, zero rating of services of transportation of export cargo by Indian ships and implementation of e-payment mode for collection of ocean freight.

Source: www.livemint.com, 13 February 2018

‘Dry Ports to boost JK economy, create jobs’

Jammu: Minister for Finance Dr Haseeb Drabu on Monday said the proposed Dry Ports to be established by the Dubai Ports World and the J&K Government through Joint Venture at Jammu and Srinagar will immensely improve the quality and structure of the local economy. “The proposed Multi-Modal Logistics Parks (Dry Ports) will facilitate faster movement of local produce to the processing centres and the markets outside. This will raise the income of farmers, industrialists, traders and businessmen and create a large number of jobs,” Dr Drabu told media-persons on his arrival from Dubai here this morning. Drabu, on behalf of J&K Government, yesterday signed an MoU in Abu Dhabi with Dubai Ports Chairman & CEO Sultan Ahmed Bin Sulayem in presence of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan for setting up maiden Multi-Modal Logistics Parks in J&K through Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

The Finance Minister said that the Multi-Modal Logistic Park as the name suggests is one centralized place for all types of transportation activities and value-added services needed by exporters and local traders for shipping their goods. “It also works as an interlinking point for all modes of transport at one specific place,” he said and added that the Dubai Ports team has already reached here to formally start work on the ambitious project in consultation with the State’s Industries and Commerce Department. “It is heartening to note that the State Government has already started receiving business enquiries from various multinational companies in this regard,” Dr Drabu said adding that in the first phase an investment of Rs 1500 crore would be made by the Dubai Ports World in the multi-modal logistics parks (Dry Port) which would swell up to Rs 5000 crore over the next 5 years. He said the proposed Inland Logistic Parks to be established at Samba in Jammu and Ompora in Kashmir would include warehouses and specialised storage solutions including CA Stores and Cold Storage Chains for transportation of agriculture, horticulture and handicraft products and other trade-able goods from J&K directly to the markets worldwide bringing down the transportation costs substantially. Enumerating on how the ambitious project is

going to benefit J&K, Dr Drabu said it will not only bring down the transportation costs of goods but also increase their market access and transform the abysmal scenario wherein logistics accounts for about 18% of the total product cost in the State, as against 8-12% in other countries. “These Logistic Parks would immensely improve efficiency in freight movement bringing down the transportation costs by 20 to 25 percent and giving major flip top the local economy,” he said. Pertinently, Sultan Ahmed Bin Sulayem, along with a team of Senior Executives of Dubai Ports visited J&K earlier this week to hash-out the modalities for setting up Inland Logistics Parks in Jammu and Srinagar and finalize the MoU in this regard. The Dubai Ports delegation held detailed deliberations with the Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti, Finance Minister, Dr Haseeb Drabu, Industries Minister, Chander Parkash Ganga and other State Government officials and also visited the proposed site for the Logistics Park at Samba in Jammu. The delegation will be again visiting the State during summers this year to finalize the site in Kashmir, preferably at Ompora near the Srinagar International Airport.

Source: kashmirilife.net, 12 February 2018



MARINE ENVIRONMENT



Plastic pollution: Scientists' plea on threat to ocean giants

- Helen Briggs

Scientists say there needs to be more research into the impact of plastic pollution on sharks, whales and rays. A study, in the journal *Trends in Ecology and Evolution*, says the creatures may be swallowing hundreds of tiny bits of plastic a day. Microplastic pollution has the potential to further reduce the population sizes of the large filter feeders, they say. Yet, there is very little research being carried out into the risks. Researchers from the US, Australia and Italy looked at data on threats to large filter feeders from microplastics. These small plastic pieces less than five millimetres long can be harmful to the ocean and aquatic life. The Gulf of Mexico, the Mediterranean Sea, the Bay of Bengal and the Coral Triangle are priorities for monitoring, according to a review of studies. "The full magnitude of risks of ingesting microplastics are yet to be fully investigated," said Elitza Germanov of Murdoch University, Australia, and researcher at the US Marine Megafauna Foundation. Possible risks include reduced nutritional uptake and damage to the digestive system when microplastics are ingested, she said. In addition, toxin exposure through plastic ingestion could affect many biological processes, such as growth and reproduction, putting filter feeding populations "under even more strain", she added.

Flagship species

The study argues that large filter feeders, many of which are "charismatic and economically important species", should be prioritised for further research into risks from microplastics. Filter feeders swallow hundreds of cubic metres of water a day to capture their food from water, and may take in microplastics during the process. Microplastics are similar in size and mass to many types of plankton. Studies have shown chemicals associated with plastics in the bodies of whale sharks and fin whales. "Our studies on whale sharks in the Sea of Cortez and on fin whales in the Mediterranean Sea confirmed exposure to toxic chemicals, indicating that these filter feeders are taking up microplastics in their feeding grounds," said co-researcher Prof Maria Fossi of the University of Siena in Italy. "Exposure to these plastic-associated toxins pose a major threat to the health of these animals since it can alter the

hormones, which regulate the body's growth and development, metabolism, and reproductive functions, among other things." Whale sharks feeding in the Sea of Cortez off Mexico's Baja Peninsula, which is an important breeding ground, are estimated to ingest under 200 pieces of plastic per day. Fin whales in the Mediterranean Sea are thought to be swallowing closer to 2,000 microplastic particles per day. The researchers say there have been reports of 800kg of plastic found in the carcass of a stranded whale in France and another in Australia contained six square metres of plastic sheeting as well as 30 whole plastic carrier bags. The report highlights several key coastal regions for research and monitoring within the habitat ranges of the animals, including the Coral Triangle, the Gulf of Mexico, the Mediterranean Sea, the Bay of Bengal and other areas that have high microplastic concentration levels, such as the world's five oceanic gyres. Whale sharks and other flagship species may act as a focal point for research, especially in countries that rely on wildlife tourism, say the researchers. "It is worth highlighting that utilising these iconic species, such as whale sharks, manta rays and whales to gain the attention of and engage with communities, policy makers and managers will go far to enhance stewardship of entire marine ecosystems," said Ms Germanov, who is a PhD student at Murdoch University.

A number of filter-feeding sharks, rays and whales are on the edge of extinction. Many are long-lived and give birth to few offspring during their lives. The whale shark, for example, is listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List. Found in tropical and warm temperate waters, it is the largest fish in the world, yet feeds on tiny plankton, crustaceans and small fish.

Source: www.bbc.com, 05 february 2018

Microplastic pollution could push whale, shark towards extinction: study

Flagging off a major concern over microplastics finding their way into the annals of marine species such as manta rays, whale sharks and baleen whales, a new research claims that these species are ingesting these tiny particles of indigestible plastic while swallowing hundreds or even thousands of cubic metres of seawater every day. They are ingesting microplastics either directly from polluted water or indirectly through contaminated prey. This collaborative study, conducted by the Marine Megafauna Foundation, Murdoch University (Australia), University of Siena (Italy) and Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology, found large pieces of plastics in the guts of such creatures. "We are still trying to understand the magnitude of the issue. It has become clear, though, that microplastic contamination has the potential to further reduce the population

numbers of these species, many of which are long-lived and have few offspring throughout their lives,” says Elitza Germanov, a researcher at the Marine Megafauna Foundation and co-author of the study.

According to the study, these species are exposed to toxic chemicals through the breakdown of microplastics in their digestive systems. “Exposure to these plastic-associated toxins pose a major threat to the health of these animals since it can alter the hormones,” says Maria Cristina Fossi, a professor at the University of Siena and co-author of the study. Microplastics, which block the ability of these huge marine species to absorb nutrients and create toxic side-effects, could produce “sub-lethal effects” which would endanger their health.

Emphasising that microplastics could push some species towards extinction, Elitza Germanov from the Marine Megafauna Foundation says, “It is vital to understand the effects of microplastic pollution on ocean giants since nearly half of the mobulid rays, two-thirds of filter-feeding sharks and over one quarter of baleen whales are listed by the IUCN as globally threatened species and are prioritised for conservation.”

The fact that these species are consuming microplastics in their feeding grounds has become evident. Researchers reported an average of 0.7 plastic items per cubic metre of water around the Baja California peninsula, which is an important feeding ground for endangered whale sharks. While whale sharks may be ingesting 171 items on a daily basis, in the Mediterranean Sea, fin whales could be swallowing thousands of microplastic particles per day. “Exposure to these plastic-associated toxins poses a major threat to the health of these animals since it can alter the hormones that regulate body’s growth and development, metabolism, and reproductive functions, among other things,” adds Fossi. These giant species are at high risk of exposure since many inhabit some of the most polluted waters: Coral Triangle region, Bay of Bengal, Gulf of Mexico and Mediterranean Sea.

Source: www.downtoearth.org.in, 06 february 2018

Scientists warn microplastics pose massive threat to marine giants

Scientists are warning that microplastics in the ocean and the toxic chemicals in them are posing a significant risk to giant animals like whales, sharks, and manta rays that are marine filter feeders. Such animals swallow thousands of cubic metres of seawater daily in an effort to capture plankton, in which case they can ingest microplastics

directly from polluted water or indirectly through contaminated prey, the scientific analysis published in the journal *Trends in Ecology & Evolution* said. It said plastic-associated chemicals and pollutants can accumulate over decades and alter biological processes in the animals, leading to altered growth, development and reproduction, including reduced fertility. 'While a definitive connection between microplastic ingestion and toxin exposure for filter feeders remains to be confirmed, studies into seabirds and small fish have found a link,' Elitza Germanov, the lead researcher of the study, said in an email statement. The marine species are also in danger due to their habitat areas overlapping microplastic pollution hotspots like the Gulf of Mexico, the Mediterranean Sea, the Bay of Bengal and the Coral Triangle - an area from Malaysia to the Solomon Islands in the Pacific. Microplastics are small plastic pieces less than five millimetres long, which are harmful to marine life. Many of the animals, like manta rays, are threatened species, so it is difficult to assess plastic concentrations via conventional methods such as stomach analysis, Germanov said. 'So we are using the non-lethal sampling of small amounts of tissue, which we are testing for chemical tracers using sophisticated and sensitive analytical tools,' she said. Many of the filter-feeding animals live a long life but have few offspring throughout their lives. Maria Cristina Fossi, a co-author of the study, said another study she led on whale sharks in the Gulf of California and on fin whales in the Mediterranean Sea confirmed exposure to toxic chemicals. 'As these areas are hotspots for microplastics, our results could indicate that filter feeders are taking up microplastics in their feeding grounds,' she said.

Her study estimated that whale sharks may be ingesting 171 items on a daily basis, after finding an average of 0.7 plastic items per cubic meter of water around the Baja California peninsula, an important feeding ground for endangered whale sharks. Germanov, who is a PhD student at Australia's Murdoch University, said microplastic contamination had the potential to reduce the population of already vulnerable species. 'As plastic production is projected to increase globally, future research should focus on coastal regions where microplastic pollution overlaps with the critical feeding and breeding grounds of these threatened animals,' she said. Lately, there has been a large number of reports and studies on marine life facing an existential threat from the millions of tonnes of plastic waste that ends up in the oceans each year. Last year, there were reports of a whale found dead with more than 30 whole plastic bags in its stomach in Norway. In France, there were reports of a dead whale carcass with 800 kilograms of plastic inside. The United Nations Oceans organization has called it 'a planetary crisis,' as plastic production is projected to increase globally.

As of 2015, more than 6.3 billion tonnes of plastic waste have been generated. Only 20 per cent of that is recycled or destroyed through incineration. The rest ends up in the natural environment or in landfills.

Source: www.gulf-times.com, 05 february 2018

Cleaner shipping fuels could prevent hundreds of thousands of emissions-related deaths, finds new study

Cleaner, low-sulphur fuels for ships could reduce the number of deaths linked with air pollution by around a third, according to new analysis. Such fuels also have the capacity to halve the number of ship pollution-related childhood asthma cases. Ships are major contributors to global air pollution owing to the low-grade, dirty fossil fuels used to power them, which produce 3,500 times more sulphur than the diesel fuel used by road vehicles. High levels of air pollution from shipping have raised concerns about health impacts, particularly in ports and coastal regions. Recent Government figures revealed levels of some shipping pollutants were four times higher than previous figures had suggested. Laurie Laybourn-Langton, director of the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change has described air pollution as having “a major effect on public health in the UK”. He said: “Air pollutants damage our health, causing cancer, asthma, stroke and heart disease, among others.” The new research suggested some of these health problems could be alleviated by switching to cleaner fuels, a strategy put forward by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). “Cleaner marine fuels will reduce ship-related premature mortality and morbidity by 34 and 54 per cent, respectively,” wrote the authors of the new study, published in the journal *Nature Communications*. Air pollution from UK shipping is four times previous estimates

This amounts to a 137,000 fewer deaths due to air pollution every year, and around eight million fewer cases of childhood asthma. By examining measures of emissions levels from around the world in combination with estimates of health impacts, the researchers were able to deduce the potential effects of different future fuel scenarios. The IMO, which regulates shipping emissions, has proposed a reduction in the sulphur content of fuel oils used in shipping to 0.5 per cent, from the current 3.5 per cent, by 2020. “The reduction in the limit for sulphur in fuel oil used on board ships will have tangible health benefits, particularly for populations living close to ports and major shipping routes,” said IMO's spokesperson, Natasha Brown.

However, the researchers who conducted the study, led by Dr James Corbett of the University of Delaware, said low-sulphur fuels were far from a fix-all solution. “Despite these reductions, low-sulphur marine fuels will still account for around 250,000 deaths and around 6.4 million childhood asthma cases annually, and more stringent standards beyond 2020 may provide additional health benefits,” they wrote. To make a significant impact on air pollution from shipping, some experts say there is a need to move beyond fossil fuels in the sector altogether. “This is a sector with huge potential and growing commercial appetite to move to become zero-emitting both of pollutants and greenhouse gases,” Dr Tristan Smith, a shipping researcher at University College London, told The Independent. In the Nature Communications study, the scientists noted that due to the cooling effect of sulphate aerosols – pollutants emitted by ships using fuels with high levels of sulphur – there is also a climate change angle to consider.

These aerosols have a “radiative cooling effect” that helps to reduce the planet’s temperature. This means a reduction in sulphur content would diminish this cooling effect and potentially lead to warming temperatures. As such, they recommend an approach to air pollution that considers both climate change and human health, and pursues a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions as well as harmful pollutants such as sulphur gases.

Source: www.independent.co.uk, 06 February 2018

Development in coastal areas causing marine pollution

Oil and gas exploitation, maritime and aquaculture activities have been developing strongly, putting pressure on the environment, maritime sources and ecosystem.

Waste from coastal residential activities

Coastal residential activities generate many types of waste which goes to the sea through rivers and canals. The volume of waste is particularly high in coastal urban areas. Maritime activities are enormous polluting sources. The waste water from vessels contains high concentrations of mineral oil, cleaning chemicals and heavy metals which seriously threaten the quality of sea water. Ha Thanh Bien from the Vietnam Sea and Islands Administration cited a report as saying that in the Hai Phong

– Quang Ninh seaport complex alone, with 400 ships going abroad every month, the volume of ballast water discharged is estimated at 430,000-710,000 cubic meters. In 2008, the volume of waste water containing oil from 394 vessels docked at Hai Phong City reached 4,578 tons. Since 1989, Vietnam has witnessed more than 100 oil spill cases due to marine accidents which poured tens to hundreds of tons of oil into the sea. The cases mostly occurred from March to June. The Formosa One incident , for example, occurred in 2001 in Ganh Rai Bay of Ba Ria – Vung Tau province. The vessel collided into Petrolimex 01, causing a spill of 900 cubic meters of DO.

Waste from aquaculture, tourism

By the end of 2008, over 30,000 aquaculture facilities had been set up in coastal provinces, mostly located in Mekong Delta provinces, including Bac Lieu, Ca Mau, Soc Trang, Ben Tre and Tra Vinh. The total area for aquaculture remains unchanged, while the intensity of shrimp hatchery crops has increased, worsening water pollution in coastal areas caused by feed and antibiotic residue. The use of toxic chemicals in fishing is also causing pollution. The waste water from coastal areas, especially from tourism activities, is the main source, contributing one-fourth of total waste water of the country.

Waste from mining

The waste water from coal mines cause sedimentation, loss of aquatic resources and deterioration of water quality. It is estimated that the waste water volume from coal mining sites is 25-30 million cubic meters a year with the pH level of 3.1-6.5, while the solid waste volume is up to 150 million cubic meters. The residue grounds in Quang Ninh province, particularly ones near Ha Long and Bai Tu Long Bays, have had a serious impact on the area.

Source: english.vietnamnet.vn, 16 February 2018

Plastic pollution in the ocean "an enormous problem,"

When you walk along the beach in Ventura County, or pretty much any beach in the world, you're probably walking on tiny pieces of plastic derived from clothes, packaging, fishing tackle and other manmade sources. That's according to Clare Steele, an assistant professor of environmental science at CSU Channel Islands, whose research is adding to growing global awareness – and alarm – over the extent of plastic

pollution in our oceans and along our coastlines. From beaches in Ventura and the Channel Islands to those on the far-flung Cook Islands in the South Pacific and Hawaii, microscopic plastic is showing up in sand samples and even in the bellies of local wildlife, she said. Steele talked about her research and the emerging problem of microplastic pollution during an hour and a half lecture at the Ojai Library on Saturday, part of CSUCI's free Library Lecture Series at libraries across the county. "In every environment that we have looked, including deep ocean trenches and submarine canyons, seafloor sediments, beaches, we're finding ocean litter," Steele told the audience of about 25 people. "This is an enormous problem." Plastic began entering the ocean ecosystem in the 1950's when production of it started to ramp up on an industrial scale, Steele said. Today, about 150 million tons of plastic are circulating in the ocean – some of it forming giant "islands" of floating debris particles – and another 8 million tons of plastic are added each year. About 80 percent of ocean plastic pollution comes from land sources, including discarded trash such as takeout containers and plastic bags, and synthetic clothing that sheds plastic microfibers in the washing machine and eventually gets pumped out to sea. Some personal care products such as toothpaste and facial scrub also contain tiny beads of plastic that end up in the water system. Other plastic pollution comes from ocean-based activities such as fishing, Steele said. Creatures such as sand crabs can mistake particle-size plastic for food, Steele noted. She said one of her students found synthetic fibers in the stomachs of 35 percent of sand crabs sampled along the California coast. This poses a threat to the crabs because the plastic is indigestible and takes up room in their stomachs, preventing them from eating other food, she explained. Eventually, as the plastic makes its way up the food chain, it could end up in fish that people eat, she said.

People can help tackle ocean plastic pollution on an individual level by washing synthetic clothes such as fleeces less often, reducing their use of throwaway plastic items and packaging, and by participating in beach cleanups, Steele said. However, more must be done on a societal level to respond to the challenge, she said. She encouraged audience members to support policies that reduce ocean litter. "Individual actions are great, but it's going to take collective action to really deal with this problem," she said. Luckily, legislators have started taking plastic pollution seriously. In 2015, the federal government outlawed microbeads in personal care products starting in July 2017. And California's ban on plastic bags in 2016 has dramatically reduced plastic bag litter on beaches, figures show. A new California bill introduced last month, AB 1884, would make it illegal for restaurants to give out plastic straws unless guests request it. And the state's Ocean Protection Council is currently seeking public input on developing new strategies to reduce plastic trash in the ocean, including microfibers.

Linda McMillan, who lives in Meiners Oaks, attended Saturday's talk because she said she's always looking for more information, especially on environmental issues. She said she planned to share what she learned with her grandchildren when she returned home. "If we can learn, we can teach our children or grandchildren. We can raise consciousness," she said. "Every little bit helps. You have to give it an effort."

If you go:

The next free public CSUCI lecture at the Ojai Library will be on March 10 and is titled "Beaches on the Edge." The talk will examine current threats to California's coastline. The lecture will take place from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.



India Moves to Counter Growing Chinese Presence in Indian Ocean Region

- Anjana Pasricha

NEW DELHI — India has signed a pact to build naval infrastructure in the Indian Ocean archipelago of Seychelles to counter growing Chinese influence in the region. The Indian foreign minister has also made an unusual visit to Nepal where Communist parties friendly with China are due to take power. Analysts said the two moves in the past week underline India's concerns about looming Chinese presence both in the Indian Ocean and in its immediate neighborhood. Under the agreement concluded last week with Seychelles, India would build an airstrip and a jetty for its navy on Assumption Island. The base will help firm up its presence in the Indian Ocean and extend the reach of India's navy by allowing it to rotate its ships and aircraft through the islands. "Relations with countries in the Indian Ocean Region and nurturing a climate of peace and stability are important cornerstones of India's foreign policy," Indian foreign secretary, Subramaniam Jaishankar said after sealing the pact, which was renegotiated on the basis of an earlier deal signed in 2015.

India's quest for strategic bases overseas comes amid intensified worries about being encircled by an increasingly assertive China. Beijing formally opened its first overseas military base in Djibouti in East Africa last August. A greater concern, say analysts, is that Chinese assets are beginning to ring India in countries such as Bangladesh, Myanmar, Maldives and Sri Lanka that have signed on to Beijing's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). "What we have got in our midst is a constriction of the Indian strategic maneuver space within our own geographical area," says Director of National Maritime Foundation in New Delhi, Pradeep Chauhan. "As China begins to develop bases in the Indian Ocean, there is a higher risk of this competition turning into areas of conflict." Although some of the projects under the BRI have recently been cancelled or are being renegotiated due to fears of tough financial terms, it has not allayed concerns in India, which worries that a region that needs billions of dollars in infrastructure investment will not be able to resist the lure of Chinese investments.

"The real problem is of money and resources which all these countries want. There are aspirations which have gone up. Everybody wants to modernize and why not? And the Chinese are willing to offer money to them," points out Sukh Deo Muni, a South Asia expert at the Indian Institute of Defense Studies and Analyses. And the worry is that the economic presence leads to a strategic presence "because they are using infrastructure projects for strategic purposes." India's insecurities about Beijing's looming presence in the Indian Ocean and in its neighborhood stem from China's assertive behavior in the South China Sea, where it has conflicts with several countries such as Vietnam, Japan and Philippines. These concerns intensified after Beijing refused to accept the results of an international tribunal in 2016 over territorial claims in the South China Sea. "That undermines the entire fabric of international law," says Chauhan.

The growing economies of Asia have made the Indian Ocean a hugely strategic region for countries like India and China with a bulk of their trade and crude oil imports traveling over these waters. India's concerns about Beijing's growing political clout in neighboring Nepal also prompted Indian foreign minister Sushma Swaraj to visit Kathmandu days before an alliance of Communist parties is set to take power. The alliance, backed by China, won a landslide victory in elections held in December. Swaraj's visit on Thursday and Friday is seen as New Delhi's outreach to Nepali leader Khadga Prasad Oli who is expected to head the new government. "It [Swaraj's visit] speaks, it reflects a nervousness. That should have been done after he assumes the prime ministership," said Muni, pointing out that the visit would usually take place after the new government takes power. Relations between the two countries had hit a low point during Oli's previous stint as Nepal's prime minister in 2015. Accusing New Delhi of imposing an economic blockade on the country, he had built friendly ties with China in a bid to reduce the landlocked country's dependence on India.

China has pledged about \$8 billion in investments in Nepal and has promised rail links between the two countries. In the run up to the election, Oli also promised to revisit the previous government's decision to scrap a \$2.5 billion dollar contract with China for a hydroelectricity project. While India has also reached out to help small, neighboring countries like Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh develop infrastructure projects such as dams and roads, it is unable to match Chinese resources and is often accused of moving too slowly to implement the projects.

Source: www.voanews.com, 02 February 2018

India boosts maritime reach with Seychelles pact to build naval facilities

-Sanjeev Miglani

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: in.reuters.com, 01 February 2018

China's dominance at Hambantota Port worry many

As Sri Lanka celebrated 70 years of independence on February 4 from the UK, its people fear that the country faces a new form of colonialism, which is China. In an op-ed written by Jonathan Hillman, titled- "The hazards of China's global ambitions," for the Washington Post, China took over the Hambantota Port in December last year. The port was never meant to be operated by China. However, a Chinese state enterprise financed it, creating a debt that Sri Lanka could not repay. According to government sources, around 95 percent of the Sri Lankan government's revenue goes toward debt payments. If Sri Lanka cannot clear its payments, it will have to enter negotiations again with its creditors, which also include China. Both Sri Lanka and China are developing a financial centre on a reclaimed land. Also, China agreed to provide USD one billion to construct three 60-storey towers last month. It also controls one of the container terminals in the Colombo port after expanding and modernising it recently.

Sri Lanka's road infrastructure has improved significantly over the years. However, the political temptation to start new projects in the country has led to economic risks. Hillman noted that Sri Lanka's recent experience shows that the might of Asia's infrastructure, led by China has both ills and gains. As Sri Lanka's first prime minister, D. S. Senanayake, told the nation upon its independence on February 4, 1948, he said, "Freedom carries with it grave responsibilities." Hillman added that a lot has changed in the Hambantota Port. During his visit last month, he witnessed Chinese workers wearing blue jumpsuits and were on their way to the port. Out of the few ships anchored at port, one of them was a Chinese ship affiliated with China Shipping. The port's headquarters, a triangular 13-story wedge was built by a Chinese contractor. A small group of 70 people protested silently outside the Hambantota Port headquarters against China's increasing role in the port. Also, former workers of the port's employees' union went on a hunger strike a year ago. According to the proponents of the port, a special economic zone (SEZ) was to be created, which resulted in the creation of 100,000 jobs within three to five years. However, the proposal is yet to see

the light. In November last year, over 400 employees lost their jobs. Hilman wrote that the equipments of the Colombo Port is almost entirely Chinese, which explains the rise of China in manufacturing and maritime commerce. The oldest cranes were made in Europe and some of them were from Japan and South Korea. However, most of the new machinery were made in China. The shipping containers were dominated by Chinese firms as well. According to shipping consultancy Drewry, Chinese carriers handle more containers in Colombo's port than any other country.

The Colombo Port was developed under the British and was modernised to accommodate shipping containers in the 1970s. It was 25th busiest cargo port in the world in 2016. Seeing the recent developments, India and Japan, both close allies of Sri Lanka would want to counter the Chinese domination in Sri Lanka. Hambantota also houses Sri Lanka's naval headquarters. New Delhi and Tokyo are extremely worried that China would turn Hambantota Port into its own naval headquarters and are exploring more alternatives subsequently. Hambantota, located near the Indian Ocean, now serves as a warning about the hazards of China's global infrastructure push. This has also mounted pressure on India, Japan and others, including the United States. Japan has a long history of investment in Sri Lanka, offering engineering expertise. India and Japan announced a plan to build a liquefied natural gas terminal in Colombo port. The two Asian powers also discussed plans to develop a port in Trincomalee, on Sri Lanka's eastern coast. India has also expressed interest in taking over an airport in Mattala, a 30-minute drive from Hambantota.

Source: www.business-standard.com, 07 February 2018

China, Indonesia to cooperate under B&R initiative

China is ready to promote cooperation with Indonesia under the Belt and Road Initiative, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Friday in Beijing. Wang made the remarks at the third meeting of the Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation between China and Indonesia, which was co-hosted by Wang and Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi. This year marks the fifth anniversary of the establishment of the China-Indonesia comprehensive strategic partnership. Wang said China is willing to work with Indonesia to promote cooperation on the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway project and other projects under the Belt and Road Initiative. Hailing the "Indo-Pacific Strategy", which was proposed by Indonesia recently, Wang said China agrees to its open, transparent and inclusive principles, as well as its general direction of dialogue and cooperation. This year also marks the 15th

anniversary of the China-ASEAN strategic partnership. "China is willing to upgrade its ties with ASEAN and explore new models of cooperation under the East ASEAN Growth Area framework," Wang said.

Currently different parties are highly concerned about whether the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) can be reached, he said, adding China will work with Indonesia and other related parties to complete the negotiations on the RCEP at an early date, and promote regional integration and trade liberalization.

Indonesia-China relations have been developing rapidly, which brings tangible benefits to both peoples, Retno said, adding that Indonesia stands ready to further cooperate with China on the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway project and other important projects.

Source: www.globaltimes.cn, 10 february 2018