



# **MAKING WAVES**

*A maritime news brief covering:*

- **MARITIME SECURITY**
- **MARITIME FORCES**
- **SHIPPING, PORTS AND OCEAN ECONOMY**
- **MARINE ENVIRONMENT**
- **GEOPOLITICS**

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# MARITIME SECURITY

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## NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY JOINT WORKING GROUP (NIWG) STATEMENT ON MARITIME SECURITY COLLABORATION

The Joint Working Group (JWG) comprising the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), the Ministry of Transport, Nigerian Navy, Nigeria Ports Authority, Marine Police Interpol, the oil industry (represented by OCIMF) and shipping industry (represented by ICS, BIMCO, INTERCARGO, INTERTANKO and the Nigerian Shipowners' Association) was established in May 2020 in order to facilitate coordination between government and industry and align efforts to deter and respond to incidents of piracy and armed robbery in Nigerian territorial waters and EEZ. The NIMASA/Industry Working Group (NIWG) is the first coordinated effort between industry and the Nigerian Government (represented by NIMASA, Ministry of Transport, Nigerian Navy, Interpol, Marine Police, Customs and Nigerian Ports Authority) to address the issues of maritime security. The objective of the working group is to accelerate efforts to tackle maritime security threats by facilitating interaction between the stakeholders, pursuing projects through mutual collaboration, and enhancing transparency between government and industry in addressing the shared goal of achieving the permanent prevention of piracy and armed robbery in the region. By extension, ensuring the safety of seafarers and shipping operations in the region will enable Nigeria and other coastal states in the Eastern Gulf of Guinea to realise the full potential of their Blue Economies.

### **Progress update from the NIWG:**

Since the NIWG was established, considerable progress has been made to deepen collaboration between agencies and navies, build operational response capabilities, develop more robust reporting frameworks and share best practice between Government and industry. It is the view of the NIWG the progress made to date demonstrates enthusiasm on both sides to tackle the problem despite considerable challenges posed by the pandemic. Now that the foundations for more collaborative working are in place, there is considerable momentum behind the NIWG's efforts to reduce maritime security incidents in the region. At a regulatory level, NIMASA is now working directly with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in developing a National Maritime Security Strategy, Nigeria has formally endorsed industry's Best Management Practices West Africa (BMP WA) guidance and, following the entry into force of, Nigeria's Suppression of Piracy and Other Maritime Offences Act, 2019 (SPOMO Act), prosecutions are underway. The NIWG industry partners have been working with NIMASA to finalise a new Nigerian National Maritime Reporting

Framework which will support merchant vessels in distress, and NIMASA's Command, Control, Computer Communication and Information (C4i) Centre has been identified as a national focal point for coordinating the multi-agency response. These developments are a significant step forward in improving Nigeria's response capabilities and potentially enhancing security for vessels operating in Nigerian Waters. The NIWG recognises the role of the Maritime Domain Awareness for Trade - GoG (MDAT-GOG) as the single point of communication for merchant ships and is pleased to inform that cooperation between the IMB, MDAT-GoG and NIMASA's C4I Centre is progressing well.

There has also been a welcome escalation in the Nigerian Navy's maritime security response activities. Conduct of two military exercises (Operation Calm Water and Operation Sanga Sung) by NIMASA and the Nigerian Navy in recent months have been successful in testing and demonstrating response capabilities. Importantly, considerable progress has also been made to advance The Integrated National Security and Waterways Protection Infrastructure project, otherwise known as the Deep Blue Project (DBP), which aims to comprehensively address insecurity and criminality in Nigeria's territorial waters and exclusive economic zone. While COVID-19 has caused disruptions to this landmark project, delayed training required to deploy DBP assets Q4 2020/Q1 2021 has recommenced. It is agreed by the NIWG that progressing the DBP is a key priority, which will require continued support by industry and sustained resource from the Nigerian government. While this positive progress speaks to the benefits of leveraging the collective strength and capabilities of both Government and industry in striving toward a shared goal, the reality is that the risk of maritime security incidents in Nigerian waters remains high and is likely to increase in the coming months now that the monsoon season has ended.

The NIWG recognises that there is a considerable way to go, and therefore it is essential that momentum is maintained in implementing maritime security programmes and initiatives to effect real and lasting change and secure the waters blighted by maritime crime.

**Source:** [worldstagegroup.com](http://worldstagegroup.com); 09 October 2020

## **TWO CHINESE VESSELS ENTER JAPAN'S WATERS NEAR DISPUTED EAST CHINA SEA ISLANDS, REPORTS SAY**

- Henry Batyaev

Japan's Coast Guard has detected two Chinese vessels entering Japanese territorial waters near the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, NHK reported Sunday. According to the report, the two vessels attempted to approach Japanese fishing boats. Japan's Coast Guard Headquarters then deployed patrol boats to the area and warned the Chinese vessels to leave what Japan considered its territorial waters immediately.

According to NHK, this was the 18th time that a China Coast Guard vessel has crossed into the disputed waters off the coast of the Senkaku Islands since 28 August. The islands in question have long been an object of territorial disputes between China and Japan. Tokyo maintains it has had sovereignty over them since 1895 and Beijing claims that the islands are marked as a Chinese territory on Japanese maps circa 1783 and 1785. Following World War II, the islands were controlled by the United States and handed over to Japan in 1972. China believes Japan illegally seized them, while Tokyo maintains that Beijing began claiming the islands after the 1970s, when the surrounding water area was found to be full of valuable minerals. The tensions were exacerbated after the Japanese government bought three of the islands from a private owner in 2012.

**Source:** [sputniknews.com](https://sputniknews.com); 11 October 2020

## **NAVY TO HOLD PASSAGE EXERCISE WITH U.S. CARRIER**

- Dinakar Peri

Continuing the series of its maritime engagements, the Navy is scheduled to hold another Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier group on October 12, an official source said. Navy ships will hold a PASSEX with USS Ronald Reagan on October 12 as it transits through the Indian Ocean, the official said. The PASSEX is likely to be held in the waters off Kochi. On September 25, for the first time a U.S. Navy P-8A long range maritime patrol aircraft (MPA) landed at Port Blair, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, for refuelling under the bilateral logistics support agreement.

In July, frontline warships of the Navy conducted a PASSEX with the U.S. Navy's Nimitz carrier strike group near the Andaman and Nicobar islands as it was transiting the Indian Ocean. The USS Nimitz was returning from the South China Sea through the Strait of Malacca where it undertook Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOP). USS Ronald Reagan was in the South China Sea in August to conduct FONOPs amid tensions between China and the U.S. The trilateral Malabar Naval exercise with Japan and the U.S. is also scheduled to be held in November, though there is no clarity on inviting Australia for the exercise.

**Source:** [thehindu.com](https://thehindu.com); 10 October 2020

## **MIGRANT BOATS TRYING TO CROSS CHANNEL TO BE STOPPED BY BRITISH BOATS 'WITH NETS'**

- Lorraine King

The UK government are preparing to stop dinghies carrying migrants across the Channel by using nets to disable them, it has been claimed. The former marine in charge of preventing the crossings said Britain was "very close" to being able to use a new "safe return tactic" which will halt the boats. Once stopped the migrants will be sent back to France on British vessels. Dan O'Mahoney, the Clandestine Channel Threat Commander, told *The Telegraph* the new measure has been delayed because France is refusing to accept the migrants back. Mr O'Mahoney stepped into his new role in August after being appointed by Home Secretary Priti Patel and has drawn up a four-stage plan to tackle illegal migration across the Channel. He said: "We definitely are very, very close to being able to operationalise a safe return tactic where we make an intervention safely on a migrant vessel, take migrants on board our vessel and then take them back to France. "The problem with that currently is that the French won't accept them back to France." The news comes after it emerged that the Government was considering using offshore holding centres, disused prisons or retired ferries to temporarily house the migrants. He added that the current facilities for processing migrants were under a "significant amount of pressure" as the number of arrivals is more than 300 per day - the greatest numbers on record. There has been a hike in travel by air and rail during the coronavirus pandemic. Mr O'Mahoney also suggested that there was a case for increasing sentences for those involved in facilitating illegal crossing saying many immigration officers felt the current punishment was not sufficient. The former Royal Marine, who was previously director of the Joint Maritime Security Centre, said there was a four-stage plan to combat the issue.

The government's four stages will see the try and to stop the flow of migrants from Africa and the Middle East into northern France, decrease the number leaving the region for the UK, physically preventing them from entering the UK and overhaul the UK's asylum system. He said the planned method is similar to one trialled by the Royal Navy where nets were used to clog propellers and bring the boats to a standstill. In 2019, less than 30% of illegal entries into the UK was used via small boats but that has now surged to 70% as the coronavirus pandemic has hit other forms of travel.

Mr O'Mahoney has insisted that his first priority is to save the lives of those put at risk by the crossings. Next will be focusing on securing the UK border and increasing public confidence in the action being taken to stop the flow. Mr O'Mahoney also revealed the Government will turn to social media to warn would-be migrants in Africa and the Middle East that they should claim asylum in the first safe country in which they arrive rather than risk their lives to enter the UK illegally. He said: "So we're not saying stay in this very dangerous place, what we are saying is ... you will pass through multiple safe countries with perfectly civilised and functioning asylum systems.." The final part of the government's plan focusses on Ms Patel's promise to toughen up the asylum regime. Mr O'Mahoney said: "It is illegal to cross the channel in a small boat and we arrest people for illegal entry on their arrival in the UK, but it is also then legal for them to claim asylum. And that doesn't feel right.

**Source:** [mirror.co.uk](https://www.mirror.co.uk); 10 October 2020

# **INDIAN NAVY CANCELS RELIANCE NAVAL'S RS 2,500 CRORE OFFSHORE PATROL VESSEL CONTRACT: REPORT**

The Indian Navy has cancelled Reliance Naval and Engineering Ltd's (RNEL) Rs 2,500-crore naval offshore patrol vessels (NPOVs) contract, due to delay in delivery of the vessels, according to a report. In August this year, 12 companies had submitted expressions of interest (EOI) for RNEL. The contract was cancelled two weeks ago due to the delay in the delivery of the vessels, news agency PTI reported. The contract to build five warships for the Indian Navy was signed with the company in 2011, much before the Reliance Group took over the Gujarat-based shipyard from its erstwhile owner Nikhil Gandhi. Anil Ambani led Reliance ADAG Group took over Pipavav Defence And Offshore Engineering Ltd in 2015 and later renamed the entity as Reliance Naval and Engineering Ltd (RNEL).

The cancellation of the NOPV contract has cast a shadow over the bidding process of RNEL, which is currently going through the debt resolution process in the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT). The IDBI, the lead banker of the consortium of lenders of RNEL, had taken the company to the NCLT Ahmedabad due to the default in loan repayment. RNEL has an outstanding debt of over Rs 11,000 crore. In August this year, 12 companies had submitted expressions of interest (EOI) for RNEL. These included APM Terminals, United Shipbuilding Corporation (Russia), Hazel Mercantile Ltd, Chowgule Group, Interups (USA), Next Orbit Ventures, ARCIL, IARC, JM ARC, CFM ARC, Invent ARC and Phoenix ARC. These companies are required to submit their final bids by October 31. Sources told the news agency that out of the 12 companies, three major players with experience in the business, APM Terminals, United Shipbuilding Corporation (Russia), and Chowgule Group have opted out of the bid process of RNEL. APM Terminal has conveyed to the resolution professional (RP) of RNEL that it is not interested in submitting any bid as the Gujarat Maritime Board's (GMB) approval is not for the terminal business and the company is not into the shipbuilding business, said the report. Another company, United Shipbuilding of Russia, is also not keen on bidding because its management believes that pipeline of new defence naval business is not clear and the government has also cancelled the NOPV contract of RNEL. Hence, in the absence of any clear future visibility of the business, it does not make any sense to bid for RNEL shipyard.

Another company with experience in this sector, Chowgule Group, has reservations over the bid condition of furnishing a Rs 5 crore bid bond and Rs 75 crore personal guarantee, and hence, opted out of the process. In the event of these three companies walking away, only nine asset reconstruction companies (ARCs) are left in the fray. According to the sources, with these key companies walking away, the last date for bid submission is likely to be extended. RNEL may meet the same fate as two other private shipyards – ABG Shipyard and Bharati Shipyard. Both, ABG Shipyard, with a debt of over Rs 19,000 crore, and Bharati Shipyard, with a debt of over Rs 13,000 crore, are already under liquidation, and lenders are likely to get less than Rs 800 crore and Rs 600 crore, respectively, said the report.

**Source:** [defensestar.in](https://www.defensestar.in); 09 October 2020

## **RONALD REAGAN CSG CONDUCTS MARITIME SECURITY OPERATIONS IN INDIAN OCEAN**

INDIAN OCEAN - The Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group began maritime security and stability operations in the Indian Ocean, Oct. 9. The carrier strike group, including the Navy's only forward-deployed aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) and the embarked Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 5, Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Antietam (CG 54), and Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Halsey (DDG 97), routinely operates throughout the Indo-Pacific in support of U.S. commitments to regional allies and partners. These operations mark the second occasion of the 2020 deployment that the strike group has sailed in the Indian Ocean, demonstrating its capability to quickly respond to any contingency throughout the region. "Our flexible presence is a key element in helping assure our regional allies and partners that the United States remains committed to ensuring freedom of the seas," said Capt. Fred Goldhammer, commanding officer, USS Ronald Reagan. "From the international dateline to the Indian Ocean, and everywhere in between, on board Ronald Reagan we seek to preserve peace through strength, and remain ready to answer the call."

While operating in the Indian Ocean, strike group ships and aircraft will maintain high-end warfighting readiness through air defense, anti-submarine warfare, maritime strike, and force protection exercises. The United States remains committed to protecting the rights, freedoms, and lawful uses of the sea, and the ability of all countries to exercise those rights. Together, the U.S. and its allies promote peace and prosperity by supporting international norms. The Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group is forward-deployed to the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific region. U.S. 7th Fleet is the largest numbered fleet in the world, and with the help of 35 other maritime-nation allies and partners, the U.S. Navy has operated in the Indo-Pacific region for more than 70 years, providing credible, ready forces to help preserve peace and prevent conflict.

**Source:** [cpfnavy.mil](https://www.cpfnavy.mil); 09 October 2020

# MARITIME FORCES

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## IAC VIKRANT TO BE TESTED IN WATERS THIS MONTH, SEA TRIALS IN DECEMBER: SOURCES

- Rajesh Abraham

KOCHI: INS Vikrant, India's first Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC), will undergo the Basin Trials, or testing in waters with its systems and equipment fitted, this month. Considered an important phase for the under-construction aircraft carrier, the Basin Trials were earlier planned for September but the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown slowed the pace of work. If everything goes according to plan, the sea trials of the IAC will be held in December, sources said. The Indian Naval Ship Vikrant is expected to be inducted into the Indian Navy by the end of 2021. Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) Admiral Karambir Singh, during his visit to the Southern Naval Command headquarters in Kochi from September 14 to 18, had visited the Cochin Shipyard— along with other senior officers— to review the progress of the Indigenous Aircraft carrier, IAC-1.

At an “advanced stage of construction”, the IAC-1 (technically, it can be called the INS Vikrant only after its induction into the Indian Navy) is the largest and most prestigious ship building project of the Indian Navy. When contacted for comments, the Navy spokesperson neither denied nor confirmed the development. The Harbour Trials of the IAC was completed in August this year. Sources said the Basin Trials were being held for proving the propulsion (move), transmission (electricity) and shafting systems. This can be tested only in water. Major structural and outfitting work on the IAC, including major milestone activities like the starting of the Main Propulsion machinery and the trials of Power Generation machinery, was completed in February. It remains unclear if the theft of computer hardware components on board the IAC last September had delayed the progress of work. Two persons — one from Bihar and another from Rajasthan — have since been arrested for the theft. The National Investigation Agency sleuths have also recovered 19 of the 20 computer components stolen from the ship.

### **IAC to weigh 40,000 tonnes**

The INS Vikrant will weigh around 40,000 tonnes and its fighters (MiG-29K) will operate on Short Take-Off But Arrested Recovery mechanism similar to the current carrier, INS Vikramaditya, with an angular ski-jump. Helicopters will be part of its aviation complement.

**Source:** [newindianexpress.com](https://www.newindianexpress.com); 05 October 2020

## **IN MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH, INDIA SUCCESSFULLY TESTS SUPERSONIC MISSILE- ASSISTED RELEASE OF TORPEDO**

- Hemant Kumar Rout

**BHUBANESWAR:** In a major technological breakthrough, India on Monday successfully tested the Supersonic Missile Assisted Release of Torpedo (SMART) system for the first time from a defence facility off the Odisha coast. Developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), SMART is a missile assisted release of lightweight anti submarine torpedo system for Anti Submarine Warfare (ASW) operations far beyond torpedo range. The launch demonstrated India's anti submarine warfare capabilities.

Defence sources said the test was conducted from a ground based platform at the Abdul Kalam Island at about 11.45 am. All the mission objectives including missile flight upto the range and altitude, separation of the nose cone, release of torpedo and deployment of Velocity Reduction Mechanism (VRM) have been met perfectly. All the tracking stations, radars, electro-optical systems along the coast and the telemetry stations including down range ships monitored the event. "SMART is a game changer technology demonstration in the anti submarine warfare. It is one of the important missile technologies India has developed in recent times," DRDO Chairman Dr G Satheesh Reddy said.

SMART is a hybrid missile that incorporates technologies of two different weapon systems making it faster and stealthier. With this, India has got an anti-submarine weapon having much higher range. While the long range torpedo available in the world is around 50 km and rocket-assisted torpedoes can strike at a range of 150 km, the SMART will have a range of over 600 km. "Once fired, the weapon system will fly like a supersonic missile in the air at a low altitude and eject the torpedo into water after it comes closer to the target. The torpedo will then move towards the target and destroy it," said a scientist associated with the project. The technology required for SMART has been developed by a number of laboratories, including the Hyderabad-based Defence Research Development Laboratory (DRDL) and Research Centre Imarat (RCI), Agra-based Aerial Delivery Research and Development Establishment (ADRDE) and Visakhapatnam-based Naval Science and Technological Laboratory (NSTL). Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has congratulated the DRDO scientists for the significant achievement. "This will be a major technology breakthrough for stand-off capability in anti-submarine warfare," he said.

**Source:** [newindianexpress.com](http://newindianexpress.com); 05 October 2020

## PAKISTAN NAVY TO ADD OVER 50 VESSELS TO ITS FLEET

- PTI

The Pakistan Navy will add more than 50 vessels, including 20 major ships, to its fleet as part of an ambitious modernisation plan to improve its capabilities, the country's outgoing Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) said on Wednesday. Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi said in his farewell address that the Navy will induct four Chinese frigates in the next few years and as many Turkish medium-class ships between 2023 and 2025. He said the Hangor submarine project, which is being carried out in collaboration with China, was progressing according to the plan, and four submarines were being built each in Pakistan and China. "This project will transform us from a submarine-operating Navy to a submarine-building one," Abbasi was quoted as saying by the state-run Radio Pakistan.

A fleet of more than 50 vessels, including 20 major ships, was envisioned to improve the capabilities of the Navy, the report quoted him as saying. Abbasi formally handed over the command of the Pakistan Navy to the new naval chief Admiral Amjad Khan Niazi who assumed charge as the country's 22nd CNS on Wednesday. A ceremony held for the change of command was held at PNS Zafar in Islamabad, the Pakistan Navy said in a statement. Admiral Abbasi said his primary focus had been on transforming the Pakistan Navy into a combat-ready force, with special emphasis on optimum battle preparedness and professional competence. According to the Pakistan Navy, Admiral Niazi was commissioned in the Operations Branch of Pakistan Navy in 1985 and has served on various command and staff posts.

**Source:** [rediff.com](http://rediff.com); 07 October 2020

## PAKISTAN'S NEW TYPE-039B AIP SUBMARINES: IMAGE SHOWS SHIPYARD EXPANSION

- H I Sutton

The eight Type-039B 'Hangor Class' submarines will be a major boost to the Pakistan Navy. They will more than double the size of the Pakistan Navy's submarine fleet. The new submarines are variant of the Chinese Navy's Type-039A Yuan Class. Construction will be split between the China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation (CSIC) and Karachi Shipyard & Engineering Works (KSEW) in Karachi. KSEW previously participated in local construction of Pakistan's French designed Agosta class submarines. The construction site in Karachi may put to rest previous reports that the subs would be built in Ormara. In 2016 it was reported that the local submarine construction would occur at a new Submarine Rebuild Complex (SRC) being built there. No significant construction work is evident at Ormara. The new

construction hall and dry dock are at the southern end of KSEW's Karachi shipyard site. Footings for the halls was first observed in 2015. The twin-lane halls have slowly taken shape since then. The outer shell appears largely complete. Under their roof there should be enough room to build two submarines in parallel.

Work on the aligned dry dock appears to have started in 2016. It is a Norwegian designed Syncrolift ship-lift type built out over the water. Manufacture of the sections likely took place in China. The dry dock is 126m (415 ft) long and 32m (105 ft) across and has a lifting capacity of 7,881 tons. This is large enough for the new submarines, and would allow frigate sized warships and larger submarines in future. Based on current information the first of the new submarines, built in China, is expected to be delivered in 2022. Local construction of the last four hulls will last through to 2028. The acquisition from China is part of a trend. Several major Pakistan Navy warship programs have gone to China in recent years. And the Pakistan Navy and Chinese Navy already cooperate closely, included close exercises involving Chinese warships and Pakistan Navy submarines. The construction halls will be conveniently close to the Pakistan Navy's main submarine berths. They are also just north of the SSGNs (Special Service Group (Navy)) base at PNS Iqbal. This is where the Pakistan Navy's X-Craft midget submarine program is based. It seems logical that any local construction of midget submarines will also take place at the new site.

The technology transfer will benefit KSEW. Their Stirling-based AIP (Air Independent Power/Propulsion) technology is different from the French MESMA system installed on Pakistan's Agosta-90B type boats. Pakistan remains the only country to adopt the MESMA system. Type-039B submarines are a relatively conservative design however. The Type-039B submarines are likely to combine Chinese systems and weapons with Pakistani systems. Local weapons are expected to include the nuclear-capable Babur cruise missile. Armed with these the boats will form part of Pakistan's nuclear deterrent. How this deterrence role will be reconciled with typical attack submarine duties remains unclear.

**Source:** [navalnews.com](http://navalnews.com); 06 October 2020

## **SETBACK FOR PRIVATE SHIPYARDS AS NAVY CANCELS RS 20,000 CR LANDING PLATFORM DOCKS CONTRACT**

New Delhi: Seven years after it first initiated it, the defence ministry has withdrawn a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the Rs 20,000 crore Landing Dock Platform project, which is being seen as a setback to private domestic shipyards that were interested in it. These Landing Dock Platforms (LPDs), also known as amphibious transport docks by some navies, are meant to weigh around 30,000 tonnes, and be able to carry an Army battalion, tanks and armoured carriers into a war zone, along with helicopters.

Sources in the defence and security establishment said the Navy will now decide new qualitative requirements for the amphibious warships, because too much time has elapsed since the RFP was put out. However, a different set of sources say that more

than the ‘time gap’, the real issue was the emergence of a single-vendor situation, with an internal capability assessment going against one of the two shipyards in contention. The retraction took place on 25 September, sources said, adding that the RFP has been withdrawn after nine extensions and one re-submission of bids in seven years. It is hoped that the new RFP for the warships will allow much wider participation and could also involve public shipyards. The entire process will take time, the sources admitted.

### **The RFP process**

In November 2013, the Navy had invited proposals from private shipyards to build four LPDs at an approximate cost of Rs 20,000 crore. In July 2014, three shipyards – ABG Shipyard, L&T Shipbuilding and Reliance Naval (then called Pipavav Defence and Offshore Engineering Company Ltd) – submitted bids. They were the only technically qualified shipyards for the project. Between 2014 and 2017, the defence ministry extended the bid four times, before disqualifying ABG due to financial stress and loan defaults. It then directed L&T Shipbuilding and Reliance Naval for resubmission of the commercial bid. Then, between 2017 and 2020, the ministry asked both to extend their commercial bid five times. The plan was for the Indian shipyards to tie up with foreign firms to build the LPDs in India. French defence giant DCNS, which is already building Scorpene submarines in India through its domestic partner Mazagaon Dock Ltd (MDL) in Mumbai, was also eyeing the project. DCNS had tied up with Pipavav (now Reliance Naval) and was supposed to provide technical and design assistance. L&T, meanwhile, had tied up with Spain’s Navantia, and was considered the front-runner for the LPD project.

### **CAG report**

Last month, a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report noted that the Indian Navy does not have adequate auxiliary vessels, LPDs, fleet tankers and cadet training ships. The CAG noted that the existing capability of the LPD was found to be inadequate to meet requirements of amphibious and expeditionary operations. “This was due to failure to fix a specified time frame for obtaining a corporate debt restructuring exit certificate by one of the participating firms,” the report stated.

**Source:** [theprint.in](http://theprint.in); 12 October 2020

## **NAVY TO UNVEIL DENA DESTROYER, SABA MINESWEEPER WITHIN TWO MONTHS**

TEHRAN – The Iranian Navy will unveil some of its homegrown products including Dena destroyer and Saba minesweeper within the next two months, Navy Commander Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi has said. Speaking with Tasnim on Saturday, Khanzadi also said Iran’s first homegrown auxiliary ship, named “Persian Gulf”, will be unveiled within the next two months. The auxiliary ship is capable of sailing around the globe three times without being refueled, he said. The Navy chief said that once fueled up, the vessel can circumnavigate the globe three times.

The non-stop navigation capability would greatly contribute to “defense and security stability” in the region, the commander added. Khanzadi said the homegrown auxiliary ship can carry several military choppers and drones, and is equipped with a combination of missile systems and weapons fit for long journeys in ocean. The commander underlined that the Iranian Navy’s power serves maritime security in the region and the world. In remarks last month, Khanzadi said his forces are ready to respond to any kind of threat, but “we fully respect the territorial integrity of neighboring, friendly countries.”

He made the remarks after a three-day joint military exercise held in Iran’s southern waters. The message of the war game was “power, peace, and security”, the rear admiral pointed out. The enemies know that if they act mischievously, they will receive a decisive reaction, Khanzadi said, adding, “They are concerned and they are trying to convey their concern, through the media outlets they own, to the nations of the region to make it a collective concern.” The Navy chief also warned the enemies of the consequences of trying to invade Iran’s territory through water, saying, “We are capable of thwarting the conspiracies.”

**Source:** [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com); 10 October 2020

# SHIPPING, PORTS AND OCEAN ECONOMY

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## LNG IMPORTS SET TO PICK UP AS INDIA UNLOCKS

- IANS

New Delhi: As gas demand picks up in the country in the unlock phase, imports are set to pick up in coming months with increased shipments at ports to receive liquefied natural gas (LNG). The LNG imports are also expected to pick up as gas transportation utility GAIL has reopened its five million tonne Ratnagiri LNG terminal on the West coast after monsoon related forced a shutdown in May. A GAIL official said that imports at Ratnagiri have resumed and would soon reach normal levels. The PSU receives around 5 LNG cargoes a month at Ratnagiri but since lockdown one in March, imports have remained hit and cargo unloading has only started in late September. Gas imports form an important component of meeting India's overtake energy Demand. But with Covid induced demand suppression, imports were badly hit. Now with demand returning back to pre covid levels, there is an expectation that LNG cargoes would start hitting the Indian shores at much more regular intervals.

India meets about half of its daily 160-170 million standard cubic meters (mmscm) of gas demand through imports. But imports had slipped sharply in April. The unlock phase has started bringing back demand. The unlock has again put demand back in the CGD segment where more households are getting connected to piped gas. Also, most fertiliser and power plants, key consumers of gas, are now operating at a normal rate.

**Source:** [economictimes.com](https://economictimes.com); 06 October 2020

## CHINA'S PUSH LETS FOREIGN POACHERS STEAL OUR FISH, SAY EXPERTS

- Ainaa Aiman

PETALING JAYA: China's dominance in the South China Sea, and the big power rivalry in the area, has led to foreign fishing vessels poaching in Malaysia's rich marine resources, say experts and fishermen. Thomas Benjamin Daniel, of the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS), told FMT: "The pervasiveness of the South

China Sea dispute, and China's dominating role in it, has impacted coastal fishermen in Sabah and Sarawak. "Besides reports of illegal Chinese fishing in Malaysian waters, China has also forced Vietnamese fishermen to fish further south and into our waters. Malaysia's capacity to constantly monitor such a huge stretch of water is also limited." The lack of enforcement and surveillance technology on Malaysia's territorial waters has made it easier for foreigners to encroach into Malaysian waters. China claims nearly all of the South China Sea through the "nine dash line". An international court ruling in 2016 said its claims — which overlap with those of Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, Taiwan and the Philippines — have no legal basis. Beijing rejected the ruling.

### **Big foreign trawlers bullying local fishermen**

The head of the Sabah fishermen association for the Kota Kinabalu district, Arsit Sedi, told FMT that local fisherman boats there usually only fish within 50km from shore. But he said there was an ongoing problem with foreign boats from Vietnam, Thailand and China trespassing into their fishing zones. "Their ships are so much bigger than ours, and they would hit our small boats. We cannot deny this. But usually there is no detailed report from our local fishermen victims," he told FMT. The head of the association for the Kota Belud district, Makbul Matdin, also alluded to this fact, saying that even though there seems to be no direct, visible effects from the South China Sea conflict, encroachment from fishing vessels, especially from Thailand and Myanmar, would steal from the local fisherman's ricebowl. "They are there. Because our area has so much in fishery resources. But our local fishermen are not as skilled when it comes to going out to the deeper waters. "Sometimes there are local owners of larger fishing vessels, but they do not hire locals. They hire foreigners from Thailand and Myanmar. That's how the encroachments happen. We have competition with them. "We suffer a lot of losses. Firstly, when they trespass into our waters, it's not like they bring the fish to us. They take it to their countries."

### **Malaysian coastal fishermen suffer losses**

"Our fishermen also make a lot of losses from not being able to explore the deeper seas. It's not to say they can't. They can. But there are difficulties. They need advanced technology and they usually don't have the skills or resources."

Former head and senior fellow at the Centre for Maritime Security and Diplomacy under the Maritime Institute of Malaysia (MIMA), Martin A Sebastian, meanwhile argued that the loss of fisheries to foreign trawlers stems from the mismanagement of the waters. As a result, there is an increase in illegal unreported and unregulated fishing. "When there are no local fishing vessels harvesting the fisheries, there is bound to be foreigners doing so. We don't have satellites or unmanned aerial vehicles to patrol the area. We don't actually know how much we're losing." As a result, he said small-time Malaysian fishermen are severely losing out on what could be large profits. Many of them are getting poorer and poorer. The younger generation are also losing interest in an otherwise familial industry. He said that Thailand is a major fisheries exporter while also feeding their own population, which is double that of Malaysia, with only the Andaman Sea and Gulf of Thailand as their major waterways. "Malaysia

has half the population, but three major maritime estates with the Straits of Malacca, South China Sea and the Sulu Celebes Sea,” he said.

### **RM6 billion a year in revenue lost**

And yet, he said Malaysia still struggles to be a major fish exporter, and imports fish from other countries, reportedly losing RM6 billion worth of fisheries annually. He said, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) under the United Nations, Malaysia imported US\$976.6 million of fish and fisheries products in 2017. He argued that part of the reason was that there was no outlined strategies or goals for the fishery industry in all three editions of the National Agriculture Policy – the latest being for the period between 1998 and 2010. Sebastian suggested that Malaysia look into strategies for all three types of fishery activities – capture fishing (fishes obtained from the sea), mariculture and aquaculture. “The National Agrofood Policy expires in 2020 and the Department of Fisheries Strategic Plan expires in 2020 as well. We do not have a ‘Fish Stock Assessment’ for our maritime estate and Maximum Sustainable Yield policies for fisheries... the National Plan of Action for IUU (NPOU-IUU) also needs to be revisited as it was published in 2013.” He said Malaysia must address fisheries holistically as a food, revenue and human security issue.

“Only then will we be able to safeguard the resources in our maritime estate. The more fishermen are out there, the better our eyes and ears for enforcement activities (in the South China Sea).” He suggested that Malaysia work in collaboration with international organisations like Global Fishing Watch, Asean Maritime Transparency Initiative and United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime – Global Maritime Crimes Programme (UNODC-GMCP) for better surveillance to address the management and crime issues occurring at sea. On top of that, he also recommended corporatising the Department of Fisheries for effective industrialisation of Malaysia’s maritime real estate. Sebastian, a retired captain of the Royal Malaysia Navy, also suggested revisiting the policies for the naval outposts and converting them into centres for fishery management.

**Source:** [freemalaysai.com](http://freemalaysai.com); 11 October 2020

## **TURKEY TO COMMISSION 3RD FLOATING STORAGE AND REGASIFICATION UNIT IN 2021**

- Barry Parker

Turkey is set to commission its third floating storage and regasification unit (FSRU) next year, Deputy Energy and Natural Resources Minister Alparslan Bayraktar said Thursday. "It will add further strength to the country's natural gas infrastructure and contribute to the supply security," he added. Bayraktar said the third FSRU will operate at the Gulf of Saros, in the country's northwest. The two others are anchored in the industrial Aliğa district of western Izmir and the Dörtöyöl district of the southern Hatay province. Speaking at the "Natural Gas Workshop and Panel,"

organized by the Turkish Academy of Sciences, deputy minister Bayraktar said, "It will be added to our infrastructure next year." He said natural gas holds an important place in Turkey's future energy targets and clean energy policy. He cited an International Energy Agency (IEA) report and added that natural gas will secure its place as an important resource in the next 20 years. "Turkey's natural gas transmission lines have reached 18,000 kilometers, while distribution lines have reached 144,000 kilometers," he said. Bayraktar added that the National Energy and Mining Policy of the country has long prioritized accelerating hydrocarbon exploration and the country has been operating three drillships and two seismic vessels. He confirmed that drillship Kanuni is set to begin drilling activities in the Black Sea soon. Meanwhile, the new FSRU was named Ertuğrul Gazi, after the father of Osman I, the founder of the Ottoman Empire. The vessel has a storage capacity of 170,000 cubic meters liquefied natural gas (LNG) and 102 million standard cubic meters in gas form, while its regasification capacity of 28 million standard cubic meters.

Speaking on Turkey's recent 320 billion cubic meters (bcm) natural gas discovery in the Black Sea, Bayraktar said it will have a significant effect on the natural gas and energy markets, significantly affecting the Turkish economy. He reiterated that the area bears the potential for future discoveries. "Turkey, from the very beginning, has been open in all aspects, from the use of drilling equipment, following international standards in tests to announcing the discovery. We will continue to do so from now on," he said. On Aug. 21, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced the discovery of 320 bcm of natural gas reserves at the Tuna-1 well in the Sakarya Gas Field, located around 170 kilometers offshore in the Black Sea. The discovery has proved the existence of sizable deposits deep under the seabed. Bayraktar highlighted that the discovery, in the coming years, is set to contribute greatly to Turkey's supply security and natural gas portfolio. He noted that challenging technical, economic and technological work is required to deliver this gas to consumers in 2023 and said that they "have started and are carrying out simultaneous studies."

### **'East Med activities per international law'**

Bayraktar went on to say that Ankara has also been carrying out drilling and exploration activities in the Eastern Mediterranean in areas that fall under its continental shelf. "All activities are carried out in the region in a legitimate way and per international law," he said, pointing out that the U.N. has recently certified the Turkey-Libya maritime delimitation agreement.

On Oct.1, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres certified the Turkey-Libya maritime jurisdiction deal that covers parts of the Eastern Mediterranean. Bayraktar added that the U.N. certification validates Turkey's legal, lawful businesses. The pact with Libya's Government of National Accord (GNA) was signed Nov. 27, 2019, and passed by Turkey's parliament Dec. 5. It took effect Dec. 8 after the two countries published it in their respective official gazettes. Ankara applied to the U.N. on Dec. 12 to register the pact. The memorandum setting marine jurisdictions rejects unilateral and illegal activities by other regional countries and international firms and aims to protect the rights of both countries. The agreement also confirmed that Turkey and Libya are maritime neighbors. The delimitation starts from Turkey's southwestern

coast of Fethiye-Marmaris-Kaş and extends to the Derna-Tobruk-Bordia coastline of Libya. It recognizes Turkey's rights in its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) extending into the southeast of the island of Crete, thwarting any illegal attempts to confine the country's EEZ in the Mediterranean. Bayraktar also said that one of the most important problems in Turkey's energy economy and one of the main causes of the current account deficit is gas imports.

"To reduce this, we will continue our exploration activities with determination, whatever our possibilities are, with special attention to sea exploration," he noted. He added that the works to make Turkey an energy hub continues and stressed that the country needs to continue liberalizing the gas markets like the electricity market. This liberalization has not been as rapid as expected as the country was pushed towards "purchase or pay" businesses or long-term contracts, Bayraktar said. Turkey's current contracts expire in 2021, he said, adding that "provides an important opportunity for different players to enter the natural gas market and strengthen our sector." "Our expectations, efforts and negotiations are toward more flexible and competitive gas contracts that will support the Turkish industry, power sector and households, while strengthening the gas sector," he concluded.

**Source:** [dailysabah.com](https://dailysabah.com); 08 October 2020

## **INDIAN GOVERNMENT WANTS MANUFACTURERS TO MANAGE PLASTIC WASTE — BUT ITS PROPOSED RULES ARE RUBBISH**

- Bhasker Tripathi, IndiaSpend.com

The central government's proposed rules for "extended producer responsibility" for plastic waste –which would make a manufacturer responsible for managing plastic waste after a consumer has used their product – are unlikely to meet their objective, industry observers and stakeholders say.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change released the draft Uniform Framework for Extended Producer Responsibility (Under Plastic Waste Management Rules 2016) on June 26, seeking stakeholder comment by July 31. IndiaSpend wrote to the environment ministry to ask how many comments had come in and when the rules would be finalised, but they did not respond. India's green court, the National Green Tribunal, in an ongoing case about plastic waste management, directed the environment ministry on September 10, to finalise and enforce the extended producer responsibility guidelines "as far as possible within three months".

The extended producer responsibility puts the financial and/or physical onus on manufacturers – meaning plastic producers, importers and brand-owners – for the treatment, recycling, reuse or disposal of products after a consumer has used and disposed of them. India first introduced extended producer responsibility to manage electronic-waste in 2012. It extended the responsibility to plastic manufacturers after the Plastic Waste Management Rules 2016 were notified in 2016. The rules made producers and importers of plastic as well as brand owners that use plastic for packaging accountable for managing the end waste. The mechanism through which they would do so is spelt out in the draft extended producer responsibility rules issued in June. The draft rules offer three options to producers: pay a fee into a central corpus that would be spent towards managing the waste, buy credits from a system that would be established to offset the plastic waste they generate or participate in and pay for establishing producer responsibility organisations to collect and manage post-consumer plastic waste. The draft rules propose to give manufacturers five years to achieve waste management targets, starting with 30% and moving up to 90% in the fifth year after the rules are notified. All stakeholders involved in the waste management process – producers, civic bodies, collectors, recyclers, etc – would be registered with a new national registry through an online portal.

Industry experts who have studied the draft say the rules do not hold producers responsible, rather offer them ways to evade responsibility. By failing to put curbs on overproduction, the draft fails to emphasise waste minimisation and also provides no clarity on how these models will work. “The polluter-pays principle is behind all the three models suggested for producers, which, in other words, is [equivalent to telling plastic manufacturers to] pay and continue to pollute,” Dharmesh Shah, an independent public policy researcher who advises the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives and several other groups, told IndiaSpend. “This approach fails to address the production issue and does little to stop the production of single-use plastics at source.” The draft guidelines permit all possible extended producer responsibility models without examining the ones most suited for the Indian context, Swati Singh Sambyal, a Delhi-based waste management expert, told IndiaSpend. “The draft needs further streamlining and strengthening. It cannot work with multiple licensing/registration procedures, committees and authorities.”

IndiaSpend reached out to the environment ministry for their response to these objections. We will update this story if and when they respond.

### **A burgeoning crisis**

The new extended producer responsibility rules will impact the entire plastic industry, estimated to comprise more than 40,000 processing units, 85-90% of which are small and medium-sized enterprises. The industry employs about four million people. Around 43% of manufactured plastic in India is used for packaging purposes and is mostly single-use plastic. Accurate data on plastic waste generation, collection and disposal are elusive as several regional pollution boards do not file this information, as IndiaSpend had reported on April 2, 2019. These data are integral to formulating waste management policy. Nevertheless, it is estimated that India generates 9.46

million tonnes of plastic waste annually or about 946,000 truckloads at 10 tonnes a truck. Nearly 40% of this waste remains uncollected, as per the environment ministry. Most cities and towns are unable to efficiently implement plastic waste management rules, as IndiaSpend had reported earlier. This waste piles up in landfills, chokes drains and rivers and flows into the sea where it is ingested by marine animals. It leaches into the soil and groundwater, contaminating the natural environment with poisonous dioxins, as IndiaSpend reported earlier. The consequences of mismanaged waste, including plastics, to human health have become a silent and toxic crisis, killing between 400,000 and 1 million people each year in low- and middle-income countries. One of the biggest reasons for India's plastic crisis is that the country's plastic industry uses different tactics to distract, delay, dilute and derail progressive legislation on plastic control that are unfavourable to them, according to an addendum to the September global report, "Talking Trash: The Corporate Playbook of False Solutions to the Plastic Crisis". The India-segment of this report was researched and written by Shah, quoted earlier.

### **Gaps in proposed mechanisms**

Acknowledging that there cannot be a single extended producer responsibility solution suitable for implementation across all regions of the country, the draft rules provide plastic manufacturers with three options, as we said.

### **Fee-based mechanism**

Under this model, plastic manufacturers need not get directly involved in the processing, ie collection, segregation and recycling of post-consumer plastic waste. Instead, they would contribute money to an extended producer responsibility corpus fund at the central level. This may be an escrow account managed by a special purpose vehicle, an independent entity wherein private and other stakeholders can become members. The corpus is proposed to be used to provide funding to three entities in order to manage plastic waste: firstly, to urban local bodies that are primarily responsible for managing waste in the cities, secondly, to waste collectors/assemblers/recyclers and thirdly for spending on information, education and communication activities to create public awareness about segregating and managing waste.

The fee amount that a plastic manufacturer (producer/importer/brand owner) would be required to contribute to the corpus would be decided based on their quantum of plastic generation vis-à-vis "the efforts required and money spent by the urban local bodies/government to handle the plastic part of the waste", the draft rules state. The draft extended producer responsibility rules are unclear about which plastic producer can opt for this fee-based option, said Sambyal. It states that producers/importers/brand owners "who are using less quantity of plastic for packaging (cut-off quantity shall be decided by the Government after the registration process)" would work with this model. The fee-based model misses out on details and throws up several questions, said Sambyal. "Why is 'less quantity' of plastic taken as a criteria for the private sector to contribute to the central corpus?" she said. "Why keep a threshold limit for producers to contribute towards extended producer responsibility

compliance when the fee will be decided based on generation quantities?” The fee-based model would also be burdened due to regulatory channels, said Sambyal and added that deciding the appropriate fee amount would be tricky as the cost of extended producer responsibility compliance depends on multiple factors “such as type of plastic, geographical regions, type of end processing, the state of urban local bodies and so on”.

If the fee is lower than the actual extended producer responsibility cost, most producers might want to opt for the fee-based option, said Sambyal. “This would hurt the core objective of extended producer responsibility, which is to improve reuse rates and recycle packaging. Also, small entities or informal companies may not have the means to contribute to the fee.” For state-level coordination, state-level advisory boards constituted under the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 may be engaged to manage the process of recommending the disbursement of funds to the urban local bodies, recyclers and for information, education and communication activity. Representatives of producers/importers/brand owners would also become a part of these state-level advisory boards, according to the draft rules. The notion of plastic manufacturers being on boards that influence funding for plastic waste clean-up could create problems. “Yes, this [plastic manufacturers on state-level advisory boards] is a major conflict of interest,” said Shah. “They can have representation like civil society has but why should they be on the board?” Manufacturers’ representatives can be on a central committee instead, said Sambyal. The draft extended producer responsibility rules also lack clarity about the SPV’s role and indicators for state-level advisory boards to monitor for effective extended producer responsibility enforcement and implementation, she said. The draft additionally recommends the setting up of an auditing agency to certify every kilogram recycled/processed by end destination. It, however, fails to provide details on the nature of the independent auditing agency, she said.

Given that waste management is a state subject, Shah of Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives said that the draft extended producer responsibility rules encroach on a subject that falls under the state list. “It is inappropriate to create a central authority to implement and monitor a programme that is completely under the discretionary power of the state government,” he said. The corpus could be created at the state level with urban development departments and be monitored at the central level, suggested Sambyal. “Cities should be able to access the corpus through proposals to urban development departments,” Sambyal told IndiaSpend. “This will reduce administrative approvals and improve efficiency of implementation.” The draft refers to formalising the informal waste management sector. For instance, it suggests registering waste-pickers with urban local bodies “but how and what kind of modalities would be adopted to do this needs to be spelled out”, said Sambyal.

## **Producer responsibility organisation**

Under this model too, plastic manufacturers need not take on the complete operational responsibility of collecting and processing plastic waste. Instead, they can form a producer responsibility organisation or contract service to an existing one. Such organisations would be registered in the extended producer responsibility rules to

perform extended producer responsibility liabilities of member companies on their behalf. “However, the final responsibility of providing final evidence of reprocessing/export of plastic packaging rests with the producer,” states the draft rule.

The guiding principle is that “plastic producers/importers/brand-owners either by their own or through producer responsibility organisation are required to ensure that an equivalent amount of plastic is being collected and processed”, the draft states. The draft fails to outline a clear definition and role of producer responsibility organisations within the extended producer responsibility rules, Ashish Jain, founder and director of Indian Pollution Control Association, told IndiaSpend. Jain was a member of a committee constituted by the Central Pollution Control Board for the draft extended producer responsibility rules. It is unclear which agency is a producer responsibility organisation as the draft uses the abbreviation “PRO” [producer responsibility organisation] to refer to multiple agencies, said Jain. For instance, in some cases the draft extended producer responsibility rules use “PRO” to refer to a group of brand owners and producers, in other cases, producer responsibility organisation is used for recyclers and in yet other places, it is used to refer to waste management agencies. “Unless it is clear who the producer responsibility organisation is, and what its role would be, how will this model be executed?”

The draft does not clarify whether these Producer responsibility organisations will work in tandem with urban local bodies – who are primarily responsible for waste management in the existing set-up – or if they will create an independent channel, said Sambyal. “If urban local bodies are to collect, sort and segregate [plastic waste], then what role would the [producer responsibility organisation] PROs play?” she said. “Would they add to existing waste management mechanisms or manage plastic in collaboration with urban local bodies and companies? None of this is mentioned [in the draft extended producer responsibility rules]. The guidelines need to clarify this with details.” The producer responsibility organisation operational model would have to be flexible, said Jain of Indian Pollution Control Association. “They can work with informal systems and urban local bodies to work on behalf of producers/importers/brand-owners with the objective to collect and segregate plastic waste from the source and channelise it to authorised recyclers and co-processors,” he said. Sambyal is not in favour of parallel systems. “An integrated approach, with the urban local bodies forming the core of waste management services, would be more effective for cities to become better at plastic waste management,” she said. “Else, this [plastic waste management efforts] would be akin to passing the parcel.”

## **Plastic credits**

Under this model, a plastic manufacturer is not required to recycle its own plastic waste. Instead, the model proposes that the manufacturer purchase plastic credits from “properly accredited processors (recyclers, waste-to-energy plant operators, cement co-processors, users utilising plastic in road) or exporters” to ensure that an equivalent amount of “packaging waste” has been recovered and recycled to meet their waste management obligation, the draft states. Manufacturers are “mandated to acquire evidence of recycling or recovery” from properly accredited processors, the draft states. Plastic manufacturers – either themselves or by producer responsibility

organisations – and processors/exporters may exchange plastic credits for a financial transaction at a price and other terms as negotiated between them. “The accredited processors, therefore, receive additional funding for every tonne of packaging waste they reprocess and have an incentive to acquire further tonnage, thereby driving up recovery rates [of plastic waste],” the draft states. The plastic credit model does not discourage plastic production, said Shah of Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives. “Instead, it aims to offset the impact on the worst polluters by allowing certain companies or entities to extract plastics from the environment and convert them into credits that can be sold in the market,” he said and added that “conceptually, the plastic credit model borrows from the failed carbon credits mechanism”. Offset credits could typically be awarded for activities such as removing plastic from natural ecosystems such as oceans and forests or for increasing plastic recycling. “These credits will then be sold to companies that wish to spruce up their image,” said Shah. “For example, a company would be able to claim that its bottles are made of “50% recycled plastic” if it buys credits representing increased plastic recycling even if none of the recycled plastic actually makes it into the company’s bottles.” Alternatively, a company could claim to “collect 100% of the plastic we use” because it buys offset credits representing plastic collection equivalent to its plastic footprint, he said. “Plastic offset credits will offer companies a way to outsource the responsibility of the plastic they produce or use,” said Shah.

### **Curbs on overproduction**

An effective extended producer responsibility policy should emphasise on mechanisms to ensure the reduction of plastic waste through a design change in packaging and by promoting alternative materials for packaging, said Sambyal. The mantra should be to, “refuse > reduce > reuse > recycle > recover > dispose”. Shah agrees that the guidelines should aim to stop excessive production. “Targets are still linked to recovery and disposal in incinerators and cement plants, and not to reduction,” he said. “The targets should instead aim at reducing the production of single-use plastics.”

*This article first appeared on IndiaSpend, a data-driven and public-interest journalism non-profit.*

**Source:** [scroll.in](https://scroll.in); 07 October 2020

# MARINE ENVIRONMENT

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## THE MAURITIUS OIL SPILL CANNOT BE CLEANED UP, BUT DAMAGES MUST BE PAID

- Roshan Rajroop, Melita Steele and Hisayo Takada

Oil spills make visible the huge price being paid by the environment, wildlife and human communities for our reliance on fossil fuels. They are a harsh demonstration of the fragility of our oceans. They are a sad reminder of how urgent it is that we end our addiction to fossil fuels and make the transition to alternative renewable energy sources.

On the 25th of July the Japanese bulk carrier MV Wakashio — chartered by Mitsui OSK and owned by Nagashiki Shipping — struck a beautiful and irreplaceable coral reef on Mauritius' southeast coast. The ship was sailing dangerously close to the reef, and ran aground. Twelve days later, the ship began leaking heavy fuel oil, devastating one of the most beautiful places in the world and ruining the livelihoods of coastal communities. Over the past five weeks in Mauritius, we have witnessed long stretches of ocean, unique mangroves and pristine lagoons become quickly coated with oil. We have watched the people of Mauritius rushing to the beach, risking themselves as they attempt to remove the oil from every rock and grain of sand, desperately trying to recapture their homeland's beauty submerged by toxic waves, being brought relentlessly by the tide to the shore. Our hearts went out to the families of seamen who lost their lives in a salvage operation. Thousands of species around the pristine lagoons of Blue Bay, Pointe d'Esny and Mahebourg are at risk of suffocating or drowning in a sea of pollution, with dire consequences for Mauritius' tourism, and people's food security and health. Furthermore, some of the most toxic components of the oil spill can build up as hidden contaminants in marine organisms, through which they can enter into the food-chain. Oil residues accumulate in sediments, especially on shores. The impacts of this oil spill — like any other oil spill — will be felt years after the surface oil has been removed. The people of Mauritius are going to have to live with this devastating reality for decades.

There is no question that Mitsui OSK and Nagashiki Shipping are jointly the cause of the devastating pollution in Mauritian waters. After the first 12 days of their silence, Mitsui OSK and Nagashiki Shipping apologized for this disaster. For that apology to mean anything, it must be backed up with action. This would require fully applying the "polluter pays" principle, which means the companies pay for all current and future damages. At the same time, emerging reports suggest that the Japanese and Mauritian governments have entered into talks for the Japanese government to provide a mere 3.6 billion yen (almost 34 million USD) to the Mauritian government to support the local fisherfolk who have been impacted by the spill. While steps by the Japanese government to help the government of Mauritius cope with the toxic impacts of the oil

spill are welcome, Japanese taxpayers should not be liable for the actions of the Japanese companies, which were reckless enough to allow one of its largest vessels to travel so close to coral reefs and run aground. Ultimately, those who are responsible for the pollution must pay for the damage that their pollution has caused. Mitsui OSK and Nagashiki Shipping seem to be avoiding their responsibilities.

The "polluter pays" principle would require funding, among other things, a fully public independent investigation into the causes and consequences of the oil spill, and a commitment to stop using this shipping route. This needs to account for the livelihoods of those dependent on fishing and tourism, the coral reefs, mangroves, wetlands and the entire, vulnerable ecosystem. A recent announcement by Mitsui OSK shows a positive early sign as it resolves to address the damages the company caused with a long-term view toward recovery. This goes beyond the charterer's liability, and the social responsibility of the company involved is clearly required in a case like this. It is impossible to completely hold a company accountable through the law alone. The legal framework for environmental issues is under development. For this reason, Mitsui OSK and Nagashiki Shipping must proactively commit to their social responsibility, rather than taking advantage of legal loopholes. Most importantly, Mitsui OSK and Nagashiki Shipping should use this disaster as an opportunity to finally break away from fossil fuels and to shift toward sustainable renewable energy. The two companies should give up transporting coal, oil and gas. Specifically Mitsui OSK should end any involvement in oil and gas production, including around LNG.

If it weren't for fossil fuels, none of this would have happened. Companies producing, carrying and burning oil would like us to think that with enough goodwill it can be cleaned up, like milk spilled on the kitchen floor. Unfortunately, that is not the case. In addition to threatening the biodiversity of the oceans and the livelihoods of coastal communities, our use of oil is a driver of the global climate crisis. The world's foremost climate scientists have warned that we must urgently and radically minimize the use of oil, gas and coal in order to avoid the worst impacts of the climate emergency. The climate crisis is an existential threat and in response to it, there is a movement of millions of people across the world who are taking action. This oil spill is a tragic and devastating reminder that fossil fuels are toxic, and our reliance on them puts both people and the planet at risk. Now is the time to build a better future.

*Roshan Rajroop is the President of human rights organization Dis Moi. Melita Steele and Hisayo Takada are the program directors for the environmental organization Greenpeace Africa and Greenpeace Japan.*

**Source:** [ecowatch.com](https://ecowatch.com); 06 October 2020

## **OZONE HOLE OVER ANTARCTICA IS 'LARGEST' AND 'DEEPEST' IT'S BEEN IN YEARS, RESEARCHERS SAY**

- Julia Jacobo

The ozone hole over Antarctica has grown to its "maximum size" just one year after researchers reported that it was at its smallest since its discovery. The hole, which occurs annually, grew "rapidly" from mid-August and peaked in early October at about 9.2 million square miles, the World Meteorological Organization announced on Tuesday. It is at its "largest" and "deepest" in recent years, according to WMO, and was driven by a strong, stable and cold polar vortex, which kept the temperature of the ozone layer over Antarctica consistently cold.

Ozone depletion is directly related to the temperature in the stratosphere, as polar stratospheric clouds only form at temperatures below -78 degrees Celsius. The polar stratospheric clouds contain ice crystals that can turn non-reactive compounds into reactive ones, an important role in the chemical destruction of the ozone, which protects Earth from the harmful ultraviolet rays of the sun. Continued depletion of the ozone occurred after the sun returned to the South Pole in recent weeks and solar radiation ignited the chemical reactions, according to WMO. The hole will begin to return to its normal size after mid-October, when temperatures in the atmosphere begin to rise. At this time last year, scientists were happy to report that the hole had shrunk to its smallest size since it was discovered. Abnormal Antarctic weather was responsible for the occurrence rather than efforts to reduce fuel emissions, according to NASA. WMO monitors the Earth's ozone layer in conjunction with partners such as the Copernicus Atmospheric Monitoring Service, NASA and the Environment and Climate Change Canada.

This year's hole resembles the one that formed in 2018, which was also a considerable size. "There is much variability in how far ozone hole events develop each year," the director of Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service, Vincent-Henri Peuch, said in a statement. Peuch called for the continued enforcement of the 1987 international Montreal Protocol, which bans emissions of ozone-depleting chemicals. Data "clearly show a trend in decreasing area of the ozone hole" since a ban on halocarbons was enacted, according to WMO. The ozone layer, however, has the potential to return to pre-1980 levels over Antarctica by 2060, a scientific assessment published by the WMO and the United Nations in 2018 concluded.

**Source:** [abcnews.go.com](http://abcnews.go.com); 06 October 2020

## **CHINA'S CLIMATE COMMITMENT: HOW SIGNIFICANT IS IT FOR THE EARTH, AND FOR INDIA?**

- Amitabh Sinha

It's that time of the year when countries start preparing for negotiations at the year-ending UN climate change conference. This year, the conference is not happening because of the pandemic. But last week, China made an unexpected announcement that ensured that there was no lack of climate change excitement this season. Speaking

at the UN General Assembly, Chinese President Xi Jinping made two promises that came as a welcome surprise to climate change watchers.

### **What has China announced?**

First, Xi said, China would become carbon net-zero by the year 2060. Net-zero is a state in which a country's emissions are compensated by absorptions and removal of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. Absorption can be increased by creating more carbon sinks such as forests, while removal involves application of technologies such as carbon capture and storage. Second, the Chinese President announced a small but important change in China's already committed target for letting its emissions "peak", from "by 2030" to "before 2030". That means China would not allow its greenhouse gas emissions to grow beyond that point. Xi did not specify how soon "before 2030" means, but even this much is being seen as a very positive move from the world's largest emitter.

### **Why is net-zero an important target?**

For the last couple of years, there has been a concerted campaign to get countries, especially the big emitters, to commit themselves to achieve "climate neutrality" by 2050. This is sometimes referred to as the state of net-zero emissions that would require countries to significantly reduce their emissions, while increasing land or forest sinks that would absorb the emissions that do take place. If the sinks are not adequate, countries can commit themselves to deploying technologies that physically remove carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. Most of such carbon dioxide removal technologies are still unproven and extremely expensive.

Scientists and climate change campaign groups say global carbon neutrality by 2050 is the only way to achieve the Paris Agreement target of keeping global temperatures from rising beyond 2°C compared to pre-industrial times. At the current rate of emissions, the world is headed for a 3° to 4°C rise in temperatures by 2100.

### **How significant is China's commitment?**

China is the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases. It accounts for almost 30% of global emissions, more than the combined emissions in the United States, the European Union and India, the three next biggest emitters. Getting China to commit itself to a net-zero target, even if it is 10 years later than what everyone has in mind, is a big breakthrough, especially since countries have been reluctant to pledge themselves to such long term commitments. So far, the European Union was the only big emitter to have committed itself to a net-zero emission status by 2050. More than 70 other countries have also made similar commitments but most of them have relatively low emissions because of which their net-zero status would not help the planet's cause in a big way. The real heavyweights whose climate actions are crucial to achieving the Paris Agreement targets are the Big Four — China, the US, the European Union and India — who together account for more than half the global emissions, followed by countries such as Russia, Brazil, South Africa, Japan and Australia.

A week earlier, South Africa declared its intention to become carbon-neutral by 2050, but other countries have been holding back. The United States, under the Donald Trump administration, has walked out of the Paris Agreement, and does not even believe in these targets.

### **What is India's commitment?**

India has resisted pressure to make a long-term commitment, citing the fact that developed countries had utterly failed in keeping their past promises, and never delivered on the commitments they made earlier. India has also been arguing that the climate change actions it has been taking are, in relative terms, far more robust than those of the developed countries. Until now, China had been making more or less similar arguments as India. The two countries have historically played together at the climate change negotiations, even though vast differences have emerged in their emissions and development status in the last couple of decades.

Therefore, China's decision is a big shot in the arm for the success of Paris Agreement. According to Climate Action Tracker, a global group that offers scientific analysis on actions being taken by countries, the Chinese goal, if realised, would lower global warming projections for 2100 by about 0.2° to 0.3°C, the most impactful single action ever taken by any country.

### **So, what are the implications of China's commitment for India?**

The Chinese announcement is naturally expected to increase pressure on India to follow suit, and agree to some long-term commitment even if it was not exactly 2050 net-zero goal. That is something that India is unlikely to do. "It is the wrong kind of demand being put on us. In fact, if you look at the pledges that have been made in the Paris Agreement, India is the only G20 country whose actions are on track to meet the 2° goal. The other developed countries actually have to make efforts towards a 1.5° world, but they are failing even to do enough to meet the 2° target. So, yes, there would be enhanced pressure, and we will have to deal with it. But it is an unfair demand, and we will have to resist it as we have been doing all along," said Ajay Mathur, head of Delhi-based The Energy and Resources Institute. Mathur's contention is corroborated by Climate Action Tracker as well, which puts India's actions as "2°C compatible", while the US, China and even the European Union's current efforts are classified as "insufficient". Earlier this year, India was in the process of formulating a long-term climate policy for itself, but that effort seems to have been shelved as of now. Another side-effect of the Chinese decision could be an increased divergence in the positions of India and China at the climate negotiations. China might now have fewer grounds to align itself with India as a developing country.

*This article first appeared in the print edition on October 3, 2020 under the title 'China's climate commitment'.*

**Source:** [indianexpress.com](https://indianexpress.com); 07 October 2020

# **INCREASED SEA SURFACE TEMPERATURE AFFECTING INDIAN MONSOON: STUDY**

- India Science Wire

The climate across the world is changing in many ways, triggered by different global warming phenomena that have resulted in a change in the monsoon onset time and pattern. The process is affecting the agricultural yield. Any excess or little rainfall is, therefore, detrimental to these crops. A new study on variability in the Mascarene High (MH) during global warming hiatus (GWH) revealed that the region experienced significantly increased sea surface temperature (SST) during this period (1998-2016). The Mascarene High (MH) is a semi-permanent subtropical high-pressure zone in the South Indian Ocean. Apart from its large influence on African and Australian weather patterns, it also helps in driving the inter-hemispheric circulation between the Indian Ocean in the south and subcontinental landmass in the north.

A global warming hiatus is referred to a global warming pause, or a global warming slowdown, which is a period of relatively little change in globally averaged surface temperatures. The hiatus, however, can result in an increase in the SST. This warming in SST, according to the study, resulted in a decrease in the pressure gradient between the MH and the Indian landmass, which in turn suppressed the intensity of low-level cross-equatorial winds over the western Indian Ocean affecting the onset of the monsoon over the Indian subcontinent and rainfall over East Asia. The Mascarene Islands is a group of islands in the Indian Ocean east of Madagascar from where the cross equatorial winds blow to India. It is also called the Indian Ocean subtropical high, which is a high-pressure area located between 20° to 35° South latitude and 40° to 90° East longitude. The southwest monsoon caused by this high pressure area is the strongest component of the Indian subcontinent monsoon that contributes about more than 80 per cent of the annual rainfall in entire East Asia.

It is also the principal water supply source for more than a billion people in this region. Many climate modes / factors modulate the monsoon; one of the factors is Mascarene high influence. The findings are alarming for a country whose food production and economy depend heavily on monsoon rainfall. According to National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR) scientists, the weakening of the MH in the southern Indian Ocean during GWH may affect the strength of the upwelling along the coast of Somalia and Oman and thus, influence the Arabian Sea ecosystem. During the study, it was found that increased sea level and heat content in the MH region during the GWH (1998-2016) suppressed the intensity of low-level cross-equatorial winds. NCPOR scientists have also investigated the recent warming trends in MH during GWH period and found a significant positive trend in SST, sea surface height (SSH) and oceanic heat content (OHC). Out of which, SST impacted more on the monsoon with rainfall during the last 18 years. Scientists, therefore, called for urgent steps to reduce greenhouse gas emission to avert the associated risk of climate change effect, including killer heatwave and stop flooding from snow and glacier melting caused by rising temperatures. Led by Vidya PJ, the research team comprised of Ravichandran,

M Subeesh MP, Chatterjee S, and Nuncio M of NCPOR, Goa, Ministry of Earth Sciences. The research paper was published in Nature.

**Source:** [downtoearth.org.in](http://downtoearth.org.in); 07 October 2020

## **DROUGHTS THAT START OVER THE OCEAN? THEY'RE OFTEN WORSE THAN THOSE THAT FORM OVER LAND**

- Bob Berwyn

Droughts usually evoke visions of cracked earth, withered crops, dried-up rivers and dust storms. But droughts can also form over oceans, and when they then move ashore they are often more intense and longer-lasting than purely land-born dry spells. A Sept. 21 study published in the journal *Water Resources Research* found that, of all the droughts that affected land areas globally from 1981 to 2018, about 1 in 6 started over water and moved onto land, with a particularly high frequency along the West Coast of North America, said senior study author Noah Diffenbaugh, a Stanford climate researcher. "Because they usually take a number of months to migrate onto land, there is a potential that tracking moisture deficits over the ocean could provide advance warning to help protect against at least some of the most severe droughts," he said, adding that the landfalling droughts, as those that move from the ocean to terra firma are known, grow three times as quickly as land-only droughts. The research zoomed in on West Coast landfalling droughts and linked them with Pacific Ocean weather patterns that are changing in a warming world. Those dry spells happen when large areas of stable air persist much longer than normal off the West Coast. That pattern lingered so long in the period from 2012 to 2017 that scientists named it the "ridiculously resilient ridge," and a 2016 study showed that global warming made that pattern more likely. The long drought dried forests and brush, killing millions of trees, and partly setting the stage for the 2020 siege of wildfires.

Currently, more than half the West—nearly 1 million square miles—is experiencing acute drought conditions, according to the National Integrated Drought Information System. The epicenter is the Southwest, where drought conditions have mostly prevailed since about 2000, the start of a megadrought that could last for decades, according to recent research. The current Western drought could soon rise to a crisis level, with federal water managers warning that Lake Powell and Lake Mead, the two key Colorado River reservoirs, may drop to levels that could result in economically damaging cuts to water allocations in the Southwest and California. In April, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation projected inflows would be 75 percent of average; by late September, the projections had been lowered to 55 percent of average. In the last four decades, severe droughts caused \$252.7 billion in economic losses and damage in the United States, about 14 percent of the total cost of climate disasters in that span. Only hurricanes, at \$954.4 billion, and severe storms, at \$268.4 billion, have caused more damage. Droughts often damage or destroy crops and natural ecosystems like forests

and wetlands. They also affect water supplies and can reduce water available for hydropower, and for cooling coal or nuclear plants. Globally, about 55 million people are affected each year, and worsening droughts could displace up to 700 million people by 2030, according to the United Nations. But the climate processes leading to such deep dry spells are not fully understood, and that makes the landfalling drought study important, said Dim Coumou, a climate extremes researcher with the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research. The new study tracks moisture-deficit areas that can meander for months over oceans before making landfall, he said.

"That might provide opportunities for early warning," he said. "And not surprisingly, these landfalling droughts are associated with persistent high-pressure systems, so to me, understanding the dynamics of those is key."

High pressure systems are areas of relatively stable air over land or sea that are generally associated with dry conditions. They alternate with stormy low pressure systems that bring rain or snow. In a 2018 study, Coumou and other scientists showed how global warming is changing that rhythm, leading to more persistent extremes.

### **Rewinding the Drought Movie**

Co-author Julio Herrera-Estrada, a drought and sustainability researcher with Descartes Labs, said it may seem counterintuitive to think about droughts starting over the oceans. But there have always been vast ocean deserts where very little rain falls. The problem is that long-stable patterns are changing, he said, which is shifting more of those deserts over land. He's been studying the genesis and movement of droughts for quite some time, and a few years ago, showed that droughts in the United States often follow geographic patterns, starting, for example, in the Southwest, then heading north and east. "During drought in North America, what is the transport of moisture from ocean to over land?" he asked. Tracking the newly defined category of landfalling droughts was a matter of "rewinding the drought movie" to try and learn where they started.

"We usually think of droughts as stationary hazards that start and stop in one area and just [affect] that area," he said. "But maybe we can do analyses similar to what we do for hurricanes, to see where there are more tracks over decades. Droughts don't stop at borders, or at the land-ocean border. We're thinking of droughts as a dynamic hazard. That is somewhat new." Droughts are "creeping hazards," making it hard to define where they begin and end, and lags in the water cycle make predicting where and when their impacts will manifest difficult. For example, a lack of rain one year can affect downstream parts of the hydrologic system, like groundwater and wetlands, much later. "Once you have a better understanding of their nature, and how they can be caused, you have a better understanding of drought in the context of climate change and adaptation," Herrera-Estrada said. In the context of global warming, he said, the findings are a step toward more accurate drought forecasts that will make communities more resilient to climate extremes.

"In climate change, our focus is often on the mean, like the increase of average global temperature," he said. "But I think in some ways we underestimate the impacts of the

extremes. There's a disconnect—people are going to feel climate change mostly through extreme events. Those are going to affect more people." Other areas affected by droughts that start over the ocean include Chile, Argentina, New Zealand and Eastern Australia. Regional studies can show what is driving the droughts from the oceans onto every continent, but "getting from these studies to prediction is still a big step," said drought researcher Peter Greve, with the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, a climate research center in Vienna.

## **Oceans, Atmosphere and Land are Linked**

Along with devastating impacts to people, important ecosystems are also damaged by the impacts of droughts and heat waves that move between oceans and land, said Dave Breshears, a climate researcher at the University of Arizona School of Natural Resources and Environment. Breshears was part of a research team that studied those linked effects after an extreme heat wave and drought straddled Western Australia and the adjacent Indian Ocean in 2011. The team looked at anomalies in temperatures of the sea surface and over the land.

"(We) pasted those maps together, and what we saw matched up," he said. "We see that these landfalling droughts have enormous ecological impacts." In Western Australia, the impacts spread across an area as large as California, killing forests on land and coral reefs in the ocean at the same time, he added. There was a loss of seagrass and kelp, a hampering of penguin breeding and outbreaks of tree-killing bugs. Drought studies are also important for efforts to reduce Earth-warming greenhouse gas emissions, he said. "We're moving toward an urgent need to manage carbon at a huge scale, and we have to understand these connections and their ecological impacts." Plans to reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide could be crippled if more frequent and severe droughts kill even more carbon sequestering trees than they have already, he added. "These landfalling droughts are bigger, badder and more frequent in terms of the drought impacts, and yeah, we're seeing ecosystems getting hammered," he said. "This new study is a really important step in helping us understand the larger-scale connections."

## **Adapting to Deepening and Lengthening Dry Spells**

One thing is sure: global warming is intensifying droughts and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future, said Niko Wanders, a drought expert at the University of Utrecht who has calculated that the number of people worldwide facing water stress could double, to nearly 800 million, by 2050. "The landfalling droughts are interesting when you consider the droughts in California and the teleconnections with things like El Niño," he said, referring to how large-scale changes in winds and patterns of sea surface temperatures can affect the emergence and shape of a drought over adjacent land areas. The new study shows a global pattern, with a focus on the West Coasts of large continents. The findings suggest there is a lead time of many months between detecting the pattern over the ocean and the arrival of drought impacts on land. "That gives you time to prepare, and even if it's only a probability of drought impacts, you can plan low-cost, low-regret drought mitigation measures," he said. That can include up-front water conservation, before there are shortages, adjusting water storage to

anticipate drought conditions and actively recharging underground aquifers and related systems like wetlands and riparian forests, he added.

Where Wanders lives in the Netherlands, he said, that means storing water underground and recharging aquifers. Urban areas will also need to send as much water as possible into natural and man-made storage systems, he said. Instead of letting water pass swiftly through storm drains back to the sea, it should be slowed and distributed to fill up underground reservoirs. But that's currently not a high priority for urban planners in his country. It will probably take a catastrophic drought before people start to think in those terms, he said. The danger of landfalling droughts could be even greater in areas that historically don't have a lot of experience dealing with dryness, added Greve, the IIASA researcher. Areas that periodically have droughts have developed adaptation tools, but where water has always been plentiful, people are unprepared. The threat to many of them, however, is growing. "Compounded risks of heat waves and drought are a big concern," he said. "The frequency and duration are increasing, and this is clearly attributable to climate change."

**Source:** [insideclimatenews.org](https://insideclimatenews.org); 07 October 2020

# GEOPOLITICS

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## MEDICINES TO TRANSPORT VEHICLES: INDIA EXTENDS A HELPING HAND TO AFRICAN NATION COTE D'IVOIRE

- Huma Siddiqui

As part of the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi, India has handed over four models of 832 Ashok Leyland vehicles, organized a free medical camp, donated medicines, and operationalised Computer Assembling plant in Cote d'Ivoire. Confirming these to Financial Express Online, Indian ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire, Sailas Thangal, "The buses will help in revamping the transport industry in Cote d'Ivoire. This has been done under the government of India's Buyers' credit to the government of the African nation and was handed over on Saturday to three local transport Associations in three Cities in Soubre, San Pedro and Timoudi."

So far, the Indian embassy has handed over 209 vehicles to the local transporters. In 2017 Cote d'Ivoire imported 567 Tata buses under similar Buyers' credit to modernise the Abidjan city public transport system. According to Ambassador Thangal, "Indian pharma companies donated life-saving drugs to two public hospitals in Sud-Comoe Region of Ivory Coast – Dispensaire Urbaine De Grand Bassam and PMI De Grand Bassam." Indian companies including Africure Pharmaceuticals, Pharmanova Limited and Ajanta Pharmaceuticals Limited donated consignments of life-saving drugs – paracetamol, antibiotics, and anti-malarial tablets."

"Compared to India, medicines in Cote d'Ivoire cost very high. Since India's pharma sector is highly developed and affordable quality medical facilities available, there is a huge potential for closer cooperation in the health sector between the two countries," he added. The government of the African nation has invited the Indian companies to take advantage of various incentives being provided by the government and further enhance commercial ties between the two sides. Cote d'Ivoire already has the presence of almost all the major Indian Pharma companies and enjoy lion's share of the local pharma market. "The number of Ivorian people going to India for medical treatment has also been increasing in recent years but the year 2020," said the Indian envoy. Also, commercial production of Computer Assembly line installed by an Indian company under Government of India LOC (Line of Credit) at Mahatma Gandhi IT & Biotechnology Park (MGIT-BP) in VITIB, commenced.

### **More about Computer Assembling set up**

This is a state of the art unit set up in MGIT-BP, having a production capacity of 6000 units per day, is the first in Côte d'Ivoire. For the Government of Côte d'Ivoire's programme of "one citizen, one computer, and one internet connection" this is of

major importance and will help in reaching its students in colleges, universities, and households. The MGIT-BP was inaugurated by the Vice President of Cote d'Ivoire Daniel Kablan Duncan in June 2019 and symbolizes the growing and a shining example of cooperation between India and Cote d'Ivoire, energized by high level of political commitment from both the countries.

**Source:** [financialexpress.com](https://www.financialexpress.com); 06 October 2020

## **EAST CHINA SEA: JAPAN'S NEW PM SUGA FACES TEST AS CHINA PUSHES DIAOYU CLAIMS WITH DIGITAL MUSEUM**

- Julian Ryall

Japan has lodged an official complaint with China over the opening of a digital museum that details Beijing's claims to sovereignty over disputed islands in the East China Sea, the government's top spokesman said on Monday. "The Senkaku Islands have been recognised historically and under international law as an inherent part of Japan's territory and we maintain effective control over them," Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato said in a press conference in Tokyo, adding that Beijing was "not in a position" to create a website about islands that China refers to as the Diaoyu archipelago. Kato added that Japan had demanded that China take down the website.

Analysts warn that the new site detailing Beijing's claims to sovereignty over the Diaoyu Islands could force the new Japanese government of Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga to take a far firmer line on the matter with China. The website is being operated by the National Marine Data and Information Service of China, an agency of the national government, and went live on Saturday. The slickly produced site takes visitors on a tour of a virtual museum and is titled "Diaoyu Dao: The Inherent Territory of China." The website is being operated by the National Marine Data and Information Service of China, an agency of the national government, and went live on Saturday. The slickly produced site takes visitors on a tour of a virtual museum and is titled "Diaoyu Dao: The Inherent Territory of China." The uninhabited islands are presently administered by Japan, which refers to them as the Senkakus.

The site is at present solely in Chinese, but versions in Japanese, English and French will soon be available, indicating that Beijing intends to use the data as a tool to promote its claim to sovereignty in the wider international community. The site states that Japan "stole" the islands following the Meiji Restoration of 1872, a period of rapid economic and social development, and backs up its claims with historical documents and maps.

The site also has three exhibition halls, video presentations and a topographical map of the islands, displaying the "legal and historical proofs that the Diaoyu Islands belong to China," it states. In a statement issued to the South China Morning Post, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tokyo said: "The Senkaku Islands are an inherent territory of Japan, both historically and under international law, and are actually

effectively controlled “The Chinese side is not in a position to create a website for the Senkaku Islands, which is a territory of Japan, and claims based on the Chinese side’s position are not accepted,” the ministry said “From this point of view, we have protested about the website through diplomatic channels and requested that it be deleted. The virtual exhibition comes more than two years after a museum was opened in central Tokyo to reinforce Japan’s position in sovereignty debates with three of its neighbours, including its claims to the Senkakus. The other disputes are with South Korea over the Korean-held Dok-do islets, which Japan refers to as Takeshima, and an archipelago off northern Hokkaido that was seized by Soviet troops in the closing stages of World War II and is known in Japan as the Northern Isles. In terms closely resembling those of the Chinese claim, the museum says the Senkakus “are clearly an inherent part of the territory of Japan in light of historical facts and based upon international law. The displays include documents detailing the “lawful” incorporation of the islands into Japanese territory, along with maps and photographs of Japanese people living on the islands in the early decades of the last century to support that claim. Akitoshi Miyashita, a professor of international relations at Tokyo International University, said the timing of the launch of the website was “unfortunate”. “It looks very much as if the two sides have been working to have a better relationship since [Prime Minister Yoshihide] Suga came to power, to start a new first page in bilateral ties,” he said. In terms closely resembling those of the Chinese claim, the museum says the Senkakus “are clearly an inherent part of the territory of Japan in light of historical facts and based upon international law.

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Source: [scmp.com](http://scmp.com); 08 October 2020

## **HAMBANTOTA PORT NOT A ‘DEBT TRAP’ BY CHINA: SRI LANKA PRESIDENT**

- PTI

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Friday rejected concerns that China has lured Sri Lanka into a “debt trap” by financing the strategic southern port of Hambantota and said the project has a vast potential for generating income and employment opportunities. Rajapaksa said this after holding talks with a high-powered Chinese delegation led by ruling Communist Party Politburo member Yang Jiechi. Yang, China’s former foreign minister, is the first top ranking Chinese official to travel to the South Asian region since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. The visit comes amid the island nation struggling to boost its foreign reserves after its economy was hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic. During the high-level talks, the two sides agreed to resume talks on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and expedite work on the proposed Hambantota industrial zone. Yang also assured that China will firmly stand with Sri Lanka to protect its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity at international fora, including the UN Human Rights Council and continue to assist the country in its development activities. Rajapaksa expressed satisfaction over the current state of Sino-Sri Lanka relations and said China has been a long-standing friend who supported Sri Lanka irrespective of the government in power. “China extensively supported us to defeat terrorism. Bilateral relations reached a higher level following the end of the armed conflict,” he said, referring to the nearly 30-year bloody conflict with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which was fighting for a separate homeland in Northeastern Sri Lanka. “China contributed to a number of large-scale infrastructure development projects. Hambantota Port, the Port City project, Southern Expressway are some of them,” he said. Rajapaksa said that constructing a port in Hambantota was an idea of Sri Lanka and not China’s. “We were convinced that it would be a project with a vast potential for generating income and employment opportunities. China offered to fund it. Many geo-political analysis interprets this project as a “debt trap’ set up by China to gain control over Sri Lankan affairs. I want to prove that it is not the case and that this large-scale project will help improve the living standards of the people,” the president said. China is one of the biggest investors in various infrastructure projects in Sri Lanka. But there has been criticism, both locally and internationally, and growing concerns that China has lured Sri Lanka into a debt trap. The previous Maithripala Sirisena government handed over Hambantota port to a state-run Chinese firm in 2017 for a 99 years’ lease as a debt swap amounting to USD 1.2 billion.

The Chinese delegation’s visit assumes significance as Sri Lanka is expecting to receive the second tranche of a USD 1.2 billion syndicated Chinese loan. The island nation received the first tranche of USD 500 million in March. The Sri Lankan government had said that the anticipated Panda (Chinese) bonds and the syndicated Chinese loan will strengthen the country’s balance of payments in the backdrop of the country’s credit rating downgrade by Moody’s last week. Credit ratings agency Moody’s downgraded

Lanka's sovereign credit rating by two notches, saying the South Asian nation would be hard-pressed to secure funding to service its huge foreign debt. Sri Lanka was pushed down from "B2" (high credit risk) to "Caa1" (very high credit risk), as the coronavirus pandemic compounded the economic woes of the country. Sri Lanka's economy, especially the tourism sector, has been hit hard since last year – initially by the Easter Sunday attacks, which killed over 250 people and later by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

**Source:** [indianexpress.com](https://www.indianexpress.com); 09 October 2020

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