



MAKING WAVES

A maritime news brief covering:

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

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CONTENTS

MARITIME SECURITY	3
US, JAPAN, AUSTRALIA CONDUCT DRILLS IN SOUTH CHINA SEA.....	3
US APPROVES \$1.8BN WEAPONS SALE TO TAIWAN	4
NAVY WILL MAINTAIN PEAK COMBAT READINESS TO TACKLE ANY CONTINGENCY: ADMIRAL KARAMBIR SINGH	5
NAVY TESTS DRONE DELIVERIES TO ITS NUCLEAR SUBS	6
IRANIAN TANKERS HIDE IN IRAQI WATERS TO SHIP OIL ABROAD	7
MARITIME FORCES.....	8
EURONAVAL VIDEO: NAVAL GROUP STARTS SEA TRIALS OF AIR DEFENSE FREMM “ALSACE”	8
EURONAVAL ONLINE 2020: NAVAL GROUP FROM FRANCE UNVEILS SMX31E NEWEST ELECTRIC-POWERED SUBMARINE CONCEPT.....	8
FRENCH NAVY’S NEWEST NUCLEAR ATTACK SUBMARINE SUFFREN LAUNCHES MDCN CRUISE MISSILE FOR FIRST TIME.....	9
WHY IS INDIAN NAVY’S WARSHIP INS KAVARATTI SO SPECIAL AND ITS CAPABILITIES BEYOND IMAGINATION?	10
INS VAGIR: INDIAN NAVY TO GET FIFTH SCORPENE-CLASS SUBMARINE FROM MAZAGON DOCK IN SIX MONTHS	11
KEEL LAYING CEREMONY OF PAKISTAN NAVY’S MILGEM CLASS WARSHIP HELD.....	12
SHIPPING, PORTS AND OCEAN ECONOMY.....	14
SEVEN HELD AFTER BRITISH ARMY BOARDS THREATENED OIL TANKER IN ENGLISH CHANNEL	14
INDIA’S CABOTAGE POLICY CHANGE FAILS TO LIFT DIRECT CARRIER LOADINGS	15
SORT YOUR SHIPS OUT: PROTESTORS DENOUNCE UN SHIPPING AGENCY OVER CLIMATE FAILURE.....	16
ENVIRONMENT GROUPS LAUD PNP MARITIME GROUP’S QUICK ACTION	23
CAT AND MOUSE ON THE HIGH SEAS: ON THE TRAIL OF CHINA’S VAST SQUID FLEET	24
MARINE ENVIRONMENT	27
THE OZONE HOLE OVER ANTARCTICA HAS GROWN MUCH DEEPER AND WIDER IN 2020	27
THE ANTARCTIC OCEAN IS IN CLIMATE CRISIS. THIS WEEK, THE WORLD COULD TAKE A BIG STEP TOWARDS PROTECTING ITS FUTURE	28

RESEARCHERS TO TRACK HOW COASTAL STORMS IMPACT GROUNDWATER QUALITY	30
GEOPOLITICS	32
A ‘MISTAKE’ TO HAVE WALKED OUT OF QUAD, MALABAR EXERCISE IN 2008: AUSTRALIAN ENVOY BARRY O’FARRELL	32
PH-JAPAN, US IN CONTRASTING SCS MOVES	36
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	38

MARITIME SECURITY

US, JAPAN, AUSTRALIA CONDUCT DRILLS IN SOUTH CHINA SEA

- Naida Hakirevic

Vessels belonging to the US, Japanese and Australian navies gathered in the South China Sea for trilateral naval exercises. The US Navy's Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS John S. McCain (DDG 56) joined the Royal Australian Navy's (RAN) HMAS Arunta (FFH 151) and the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force's (JMSDF) JS Kirisame (DD 104) on October 19. As informed, these exercises marked the fifth time of 2020 that Australia, Japan, and the U.S. have conducted operations together in the 7th Fleet area of operations. Throughout the naval exercises, participants trained together and conducted trilateral operations designed to increase the allies' collective ability to maintain maritime security and readiness to respond to any regional contingency. HMAS Arunta's Commanding Officer, Cmdr. Troy Duggan said Australia was continuing to build on its already close relationship with Japan and the United States. "This activity is a valuable and important opportunity for all three nations," said Duggan. "Operating with our partners is essential for building and maintaining high levels of interoperability, and contributes to our shared commitment to the security, stability and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region."

Operations together included surface, subsurface, and air defense exercises, and a variety of other training events to strengthen regional maritime security operations. "We are grateful to have the opportunity of the trilateral exercise with the United States Navy and the Royal Australian Navy," Yokota Kazushi, Commander, JMSDF escort division eight, said. "For the regional peace and stability, we are making efforts to maintain and develop a Free and Open Indo-Pacific. The iron bond with our partners is its foundation. Even though COVID-19 spreads, the JMSDF continues to strengthen the relationship with our ally partners."

"By operating with our close allies in this way, here in the South China Sea, we promote transparency, the rule of law, freedom of navigation and overflight, all principles that underpin security and prosperity for the Indo-Pacific, so that all nations in the region may benefit," Cmdr. Ryan T. Easterday, commanding officer, USS John S. McCain, said. Previous exercises this year involving the U.S., Japan, and Australia in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations include exercise Sea Dragon in February, a trilateral exercise with the Reagan Carrier Strike Group in late July, a multinational group sail with USS Barry (DDG 52) in early September, which also included the Republic of Korea Navy, and Exercise Pacific Vanguard in mid-September.

Source: navaltoday.com; 20 October 2020

US APPROVES \$1.8BN WEAPONS SALE TO TAIWAN

The US has approved arms sales to Taiwan worth around \$1.8bn (£1.4bn), in a move that is likely to increase tensions with China. The Pentagon said the deal comprised three weapons systems, including rocket launchers, sensors and artillery. Taiwan, which considers itself a country, is seen as a renegade province by China. Tensions have increased in recent years and Beijing has not ruled out the use of force to take the island back. Last week, US national security adviser Robert O'Brien said that while he did not believe China was ready to invade Taiwan, the island needed to "fortify itself" for the future. Taiwan's defence ministry said the weapons would help it "build credible combat capabilities and strengthen the development of asymmetric warfare". The deal includes 135 precision-guided cruise missiles, as well as mobile light rocket launchers and air reconnaissance pods that can be attached to fighter jets. The BBC's Taiwan correspondent Cindy Sui says that under President Donald Trump, the US has sold significantly more weapons to Taiwan than before.

The island has also been seeking backing from the current administration, which, unlike its predecessors, seems willing to challenge the delicate balance Washington has maintained for decades with China and Taiwan, says our correspondent. China's Foreign Ministry says the arms deal would likely have a major impact on its relationship with the US and that it would respond as necessary, according to Reuters news agency. In recent months, the US has been intensifying its outreach to Taiwan. In August, the highest-ranking US politician to visit Taiwan in decades met the island's president, Tsai Ing-wen.

Beijing strongly criticised the meeting, warning the US "not to send any wrong signals to 'Taiwan independence' elements to avoid severe damage to China-US relations". China has also stepped up military drills that it presents domestically as rehearsals for a future invasion of Taiwan, though experts say a conflict is not imminent. While the US does sell Taiwan arms, and has an implicit security guarantee, it does not have a formal defence treaty with Taiwan as it does with Japan, South Korea and the Philippines. China and Taiwan were divided during a civil war in the 1940s but Beijing insists the island will be reclaimed at some point, by force if necessary. Tensions have risen in recent years with the election of Ms Tsai as Taiwan's president, seen as an opponent of Beijing.

Source: bbc.com; 22 October 2020

NAVY WILL MAINTAIN PEAK COMBAT READINESS TO TACKLE ANY CONTINGENCY: ADMIRAL KARAMBIR SINGH

The Navy will continue to maintain 'a high-tempo of operations' and 'peak combat readiness' to tackle any contingency, said Admiral Karambir Singh on Thursday, even as the force inducted a new indigenously-built stealth corvette designed for potent anti-submarine warfare. While the Navy chief reviewed the operational preparedness on the western seaboard off the Karwar naval base amidst the ongoing military confrontation in eastern Ladakh with China, Army chief General M M Naravane commissioned the stealth corvette INS Kavaratti at the naval dockyard at Visakhapatnam. Admiral Singh oversaw weapon firings, air-to-air combat operations, anti-submarine drills and fleet manoeuvres after embarking on guided missile destroyer INS Chennai, which was part of the carrier battle group led by aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya.

"The Navy has remained mission-deployed and combat-ready across the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), even during the rough seas of the monsoon period, towards maintaining the maritime security of the nation," he said. Gen Naravane, on the visit to the eastern seaboard, in turn, said, "The commissioning of INS Kavaratti marks yet another significant step in securing our country's maritime goals. This indigenously built anti-submarine warfare vessel is equipped with advanced weapons, composite superstructure and stealth features." INS Kavaratti is the fourth and the last of the Project-28 Kamorta-class corvettes built by defence shipyard Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Limited, Kolkata (GRSE) in Kolkata. Named after the capital of the Lakshadweep group of islands, the 3,300-tonne INS Kavaratti has been constructed using high-grade 'DMR 249A steel' produced in India. The corvette has enhanced stealth features resulting in a reduced radar cross-section, which makes her less susceptible to detection by the enemy.

The Indian Navy currently enjoys an edge over the Chinese one in IOR because of the tyranny of logistics faced by the latter. But the Indian Navy has a force-level of only one aircraft carrier, 10 destroyers, 14 frigates, 12 corvettes as well as 15 diesel-electric and two nuclear-powered submarines in terms of "major combatants" at present. As reported by TOI earlier, China has the world's largest Navy now. With an overall force of around 350 warships and submarines, including over 130 "major surface combatants", China is now aggressively hunting for logistics bases in the IOR after establishing its first overseas military base at Djibouti on the Horn of Africa in August 2017. Chinese warships and submarines, of course, enjoy access to the Karachi and Gwadar ports in Pakistan.

Source: [defensenews.in](https://www.defensenews.in); 23 October 2020

NAVY TESTS DRONE DELIVERIES TO ITS NUCLEAR SUBS

- Dave Makichuk

Consider this scenario: A pizza drone delivery place in Waikiki gets a phone call. Pizza guy answers: “Hello, Diamond Head Pizza ... what can I do for you?” “Yes, this is ballistic nuclear missile submarine USS Henry M. Jackson ... we’re currently a couple miles off the coast ... we’d like 50 pepperoni and mushroom pizzas ... five veggie pizzas ... and five gluten free pizzas ... “Thick crust or thin?” “Thin crust, please, and we’ll text you our co-ordinates ...”

OK, so you’re saying to yourself, this is not funny. As character actor Edmund Gwenn once said, “Dying is easy, comedy is hard.”

But before you dismiss this scenario ... this past week, a large quadcopter-type drone, delivered a small payload, not much larger than a small backpack, on to the deck of the Ohio-class ballistic-missile submarine USS Henry M. Jackson (SSBN 730) around the Hawaiian Islands, The National Interest reported. It was the first time the US Navy tested this method of delivery for supplying submarines while underway at sea. The USS Henry M. Jackson has a crew of about 155 officers and sailors, so the small drone-delivered package probably wasn’t carrying food supplies — it was after all an evaluation. It also didn’t travel far to get to the submarine. Photos from the event showed that the quadcopter took off from a small surface ship perhaps a few hundred meters away from the USS Henry M. Jackson, The National Interest reported. But still, the potential is there. The evaluation demonstrated potential ways in which submarines, and really any other surface ship can be resupplied without having to go into port. Submarines crave the protection of the deep, hiding out of sight, Forbes magazine reported. For modern nuclear powered submarines there are very few good reasons to surface at all during a patrol. To come to the surface risks detection by enemy radars, negating their fundamental advantage: stealth. If they are seen, they can be attacked, and if they’re attacked they can be sunk. A modern day hypersonic missile can go right through a surfaced sub.

Thus, it’s not uncommon for nuclear submarines to spend several months without breaking cover, Forbes reported. Yet there are occasions when submarines need to recover supplies. They may need medical supplies, replacement parts, provisions or even snail mail. Small Unmanned Air Vehicles (UAVs) may have some advantages over helicopters for this type of mission. Naturally they are much cheaper, even with military grade communications aboard, Forbes reported. But there are other less obvious advantages. Launching several inexpensive single-mission UAVs frees up the more versatile helicopters to conduct more complex missions. And if you lose a small UAV, that can be bad news operationally, but it won’t make headlines. And you won’t use up valuable resources conducting search and rescue for the crew. In short, UAVs make good sense for some missions. Especially if you’re ordering pizza for the crew.

Source: [asiatimes.com](https://www.asiatimes.com); 24 October 2020

IRANIAN TANKERS HIDE IN IRAQI WATERS TO SHIP OIL ABROAD

- Irina Slav

Iranian tankers are hiding in Iraqi waters to do their ship-to-ship transfers of crude oil to avoid U.S. sanctions, the Wall Street Journal reports, citing documents and U.S. officials. The Iraqi port of Al Faw is one regularly used point of transfer, according to the sources and the documents. There, Iranian tankers offload the crude to other vessels where it is mixed with oil from other sources, such as local crude, to avoid detection. Apparently, such transfers have grown into a lucrative business for the parties involved, who then sell the mixed oil as Iraqi. Ship-to-ship transfers, not just off the Iraqi coast but elsewhere, too, have become Iran's go-to method of getting its crude oil to foreign buyers amid the sanctions. While production of crude oil has declined substantially following the re-introduction of U.S. sanctions against Tehran, the country is still exporting over 800,000 bpd, as of the first half of this year, according to data from TankerTrackers.com.

China is Iran's biggest oil buyer. In fact, as Simon Watkins reported earlier this month for Oilprice.com, China has been stocking up on cheap Iranian crude. Citing an unnamed oil industry source close to Tehran's oil ministry, Watkins said China took in some 8.1 million barrels of Iranian oil between June 1 and July 21. Official reports from China said the country had not imported any Iranian crude in June. In September, TankerTrackers.com reported that Iran had upped its exports further, to almost 1.5 million bpd. This was a lot more than official data suggested, as were exports in previous months. Despite statements from U.S. officials that they are tracking Iran's ship-to-ship transfers, no direct action has been taken yet to put a stop to this. "The amount of the exports of petroleum products in Iran have been unprecedented," Iran's Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh said in August. "We have been so successful at collapsing Iran's oil sector because we enforce our sanctions," said the former U.S. special representative for Iran, Brian Hook. "We have warned the maritime community for two years of the dangers of moving Iranian oil."

Source: oilprice.com; 23 October 2020

MARITIME FORCES

EURONAVAL VIDEO: NAVAL GROUP STARTS SEA TRIALS OF AIR DEFENSE FREMM “ALSACE”

- Xavier Vavasseur

“Alsace” is the first of two air-defense frigates known as FREMM DA (Frégate Européenne Multimissions de Défense Aérienne) for the French Navy (Marine Nationale).

According to Naval Group, the FREMM DA Alsace is a strongly armed surface combatant fitted with the most performant weapon systems and equipment such as: the Herakles multifunction radar, the Aster 15 and 30 surface to air missiles, the Exocet MM 40 anti-ship missiles or the MU 90 torpedo. The performance of its combat system are reinforced with increased radar and communication capacities, a new fire control radar, and a SETIS CMS fitted with specific anti-air defense functions.

Source: navalnews.com; 21 October 2020

EURONAVAL ONLINE 2020: NAVAL GROUP FROM FRANCE UNVEILS SMX31E NEWEST ELECTRIC-POWERED SUBMARINE CONCEPT

At Euronaval Online, the digital edition of Euronaval 2020, International naval defense and maritime security industry exhibition, the French Company Naval Group unveils the SMX31E newest electric-powered submarine concept that integrates the latest digital technologies for reinforced operational efficiency and significant versatility of use. The SMX31E offers a stealthier, more autonomous, and flexible solution. More than a smart ship, the SMX31E constitutes a smart naval force to gain superiority in future underwater battlefields.

The increased invulnerability is the result of the biomimetic shape and the skin material making it stealthier against active sonar emissions. Endurance is the other asset of the SMX31E –it allows the crew to be submerged for months thanks to the high energy capacities and efficient energy management system. Using advanced artificial intelligence technology, this submarine offers maximal connectivity to interact with the rest of the fleet in a distributed underwater network. This new IT

design enables the crew to collect and process data efficiently with remote sensors allowing them to master the underwater tactical situation. At the end of the day, the SMX 31E can monitor areas 10 times larger than today with the same efficiency. This smart ship always keeps human decisions in the loop and becomes a force multiplier thanks to the integration of all kinds of drones including large-sized drones. Connected to each other, these vectors contribute to better control of an extended underwater battlefield. The SMX31E submarine will have a displacement of 3,200 tonnes with a length of 80 meters. The propulsion system consists of two rim driven electric propulsion motors. The submarine's submerged speed is 8 kts. (15 km/h) and its operational availability is 40 days. The submarine can carry 15 crew members and 12 to 20 pax.

The SMX31E submarine can be armed with 24 heavy-weight weapons including naval cruise missiles, F21 torpedoes, and anti-ship missiles. The back of the submarine has also two large modular bays that can be used to deploy UUV (Unmanned Underwater Vehicle) and XLUVV (Extra-Large Unmanned Undersea Vehicle). The submarine also has SOF (Special Operation Forces) facilities that include trunks, storage rooms, vehicles and weapons, grouping areas...

Source: navyrecognition.com; 23 October 2020

FRENCH NAVY'S NEWEST NUCLEAR ATTACK SUBMARINE SUFFREN LAUNCHES MdCN CRUISE MISSILE FOR FIRST TIME

The French Navy's first Barracuda-class nuclear-powered attack submarine Suffren successfully completed the test firing of MdCN cruise missile off the DGA Essais de missiles site in Biscarrosse, Landes on Oct. 20. The test-firing was part of the weapon integration qualification of the Suffren, carried out as part of the boat's sea trials conducted by the French defense procurement agency, DGA ("General Directorate of Armaments"), since last April.

"For the first time, a French submarine fires a cruise missile. This success gives our Navy a new strategic capability and places it among the best in the world. This new weaponry is a real breakthrough, the result of years of effort and investment, in particular permitted by the 2019-2025 Military Programming Law. I congratulate all those – French Navy, DGA, industry – who made this firing possible. Until now, French submarine forces could strike submarines and surface ships. They can now destroy heavy land infrastructure at long range," said a statement by French Minister of Armed Forces Florence Parly. Prepared by teams from the DGA, French Navy, and companies MBDA (manufacturer of the MdCN missile) and Naval Group (primary contractor for submarine), the test firing of the MdCN naval cruise missile is the latest milestone in a series of tests which has made it possible to verify correct operation of weapon systems and, more generally, the combat system of the Suffren. With a range of several hundred kilometers, the MdCN (Missile De Croisière Naval, "Naval cruise missile") is suitable for destroying infrastructures of high strategic value. After the

FREMM multi-mission frigates, the SNA Suffren are the first French vessel equipped with this conventional deep strike capability.

During the tests in the Mediterranean, the Suffren also successfully carried out the test firing of an Exocet SM39-type anti-ship missile off the DGA Essais de missiles site based on the island of Île du Levant, Var. The submarine also carried out several test shots of a F21 heavyweight torpedo. This new generation weapon is ultimately intended for all French Navy submarines. The qualification of the entire Suffren weapon system paves the way for the end of sea trials and its overall qualification. This will authorize its delivery to the French Navy, now expected to take place by the end of 2020, for the verification of its military characteristics and then its admission to active service in 2021.

Source: defpost.com; 21 October 2020

WHY IS INDIAN NAVY'S WARSHIP INS KAVARATTI SO SPECIAL AND ITS CAPABILITIES BEYOND IMAGINATION?

- Ravi Dubey

INS Kavaratti, an anti-submarine warship that augments the Indian Navy's strength, joined the Army fleet today. This warship is the fourth anti-submarine vessel built by the public sector defence undertaking Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE). Three anti-submarine warships have already become integral parts of the Navy. This war vessel's biggest feature is that it is not under the radar grip, and it is 90 percent indigenous.

Indigenous stealth warship INS Kavaratti equipped with landmine anti-tunnel system was inducted by Army Chief General Manoj Mukund Narwane in the Navy's fleet today. INS Kavaratti is the last of the four anti-submarine warships that GRSE has built for the Indian Navy under Project P28. A look at the essential facts related to INS Kavaratti: Kavaratti will be the 104th vessel built by GRSE. The first Indian-built warship INS Ajay was built in 1961 by this company. It is India's oldest shipbuilding company. India's three anti-radar and anti-submarine ships are INS Kamorta, INS Kadmat, and INS Kiltan. These are named after the islands of the Lakshadweep archipelago. INS Kavaratti is also named after Kavaratti Island in the Lakshadweep archipelago. INS Kavaratti, prepared under the Make in India project, can demolish sub-marines quickly.

Ninety percent of INS Kavaratti components are indigenously built, and with the help of new technology, the need for its maintenance will also be reduced. This warship will also work in the event of nuclear, chemical, and biological warfare. The first warship INS Komorta was built under the P20 project, which joined the Navy in 2014. This warship is an integral part of the Eastern Naval Squad. INS Kavaratti warship can

fire 120 rounds in a minute, with a range of 8000 meters in the air and 12000 meters on the surface.

The warship equipped with a surface-to-air missile system will have 12 defence missile systems. INS Kavaratti is also capable of a short-range, medium, and long-range rocket attack. It will also have under-water weapons, including the depth range rocket and torpedoes. The Indian Steel Company makes the steel used in the manufacture of INS Kavaratti of India Limited. The warship is designed by Indian naval designers, with the help of a Swedish company. In Sweden, carbon fiber has been used to replace steel in constructing a warship like Kavaratti. This warship is equipped with anti-submarine sensors, which are adept at capturing and attacking enemy pundits. This P28 warship has a 76 mm gun system.

Source: dnaindia.com; 21 October 2020

INS VAGIR: INDIAN NAVY TO GET FIFTH SCORPENE-CLASS SUBMARINE FROM MAZAGON DOCK IN SIX MONTHS

- Swaraj Baggonkar

Defence public sector undertaking (PSU) Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders (MDSL) will hand over its fifth Scorpene-class submarine to the Indian Navy by the end of this year or early next year, a top company official said. The defence PSU has stepped up the pace of construction and deliveries of submarines and ships over the last couple of years to ensure adherence to the agreed timelines. The first of the six Scorpene-class submarines, INS Kalvari, was launched in 2015 and commissioned into service in late 2017. MDSL is working with French collaborator Naval Group (earlier known as DCNS) on transfer of technology for the submarines under Project 75 (P75) with the deal valued at over Rs 23,000 crore. (This project should not be confused with P75I (Project 75 India), which envisages construction of the long-pending Rs 42,000 crore, six stealth submarines, which will be built by MDSL and L&T.) Sanjeev Singhal, Director (Finance), Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders, said: “In spite of the Covid-19 challenges, we are trying to keep the timelines of whatever we had planned earlier, including the delivery of the fifth submarine sometime by end of this year or early next year. In addition, basin trials of one of the ships are also scheduled before early November.” Since 2017 MDSL has delivered one submarine every year to the Indian Navy. INS Khanderi was launched in 2017 followed by INS Karanj in 2018 and INS Vela in 2019. Due to the Covid-19 disruption, the company suffered a setback of about three months in the development of the fifth submarine, known as INS Vagir.

The PSU believes it can complete deliveries of all the contracted submarines by 2022, with last delivery by 2022 with the last of the six, INS Vagsheer, expected to be launched by then. “In 2021-22 and 2022-23, we should be able to make up for the impact which has been there for FY21,” added Singhal, speaking at an analyst event for the PSU’s initial public offering (IPO). Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders raised Rs 443 crore through a public issue between September 29 and October 1. The company has an order book

of Rs 54,500 crore. Scorpene submarines are a class of diesel-electric attack submarines that claim to have stealth features. This class of submarines is designed to remain submerged for longer durations and undertake operations such as intelligence gathering as well as participate in special operations during hostilities. Chile, Malaysia and Brazil are the other countries that possess these submarines. India currently has 17 submarines, including two ballistic missile submarines and one nuclear-powered attack submarine. The Indian Navy also has 14 conventionally-powered submarines, developed in collaboration with French, Russian and German companies.

Eye on Exports

Following the increased focus on 'Make in India' and simultaneous surge in demand from the Ministry of Defence, MDSL was forced to overlook demand emerging from outside India. The last vessel it delivered to an overseas client was in 2014. Rear Admiral Anil Kumar Saxena, NM (Retd), Director (Shipbuilding), Mazagon Docks Shipbuilders said: "We have exported 243 ships till date. The last ships we delivered were in 2012 and 2014 to the Bahamas and Mexico, which were multi-support vessels of about 7,000 tonnes. Thereafter we stopped our exports because our hands were full with the naval (Indian Navy) orders." Saxena added: "But after that we augmented our capacity and increased it to 11 submarines and ten ships at a time. We have started to diversify into refit, exports and commercial vessels also." The company has held discussions with some potential foreign customers. "We have had dialogues with some countries from Africa and Latin America, Middle East and South East Asia. We got some leads from there and we have given our bits to them, but because of Covid-19, things are not moving as earlier and it may take some time," added Saxena. Covid-19 has affected the PSU's operations since it is headquartered in Mumbai, one of the worst hit cities in India. "The trains and buses in Mumbai were under total lockdown for three months. We have started to get 50-60 percent of people back since trains have partially resumed. We were also impacted by the sub-contracted manpower. Because they had people coming from States like UP, Bihar and Orissa, who went back. They are coming back but not at the same speed we were hoping," added Saxena.

Source: moneycontrol.com; 19 October 2020

KEEL LAYING CEREMONY OF PAKISTAN NAVY'S MILGEM CLASS WARSHIP HELD

KARACHI: A keel laying ceremony was held at Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works to inaugurate the construction of second MILGEM Class Corvette (warship) for Pakistan Navy. According to an official statement issued by Pakistan Navy's public relations department on Sunday, Minister of National Defence of Turkey Hulusi Akar attended the event as the chief guest and called it a historic occasion. Minister for Defence Production Zubeida Jalal and Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi were also present on the occasion. The foundation was laid by ASFAT (Askeri Fabrika ve Tersane İşletme, Military Factory and Shipyard Management) Ministry of Defence Production (MDP), Pakistan Navy, Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works. Speaking on the occasion, Minister Jalal lauded the

performance of Karachi Shipyard and made it clear that improving the country's productivity is an "important part of our policy". She also said that the construction of this state-of-the-art warship in Pakistan is a welcome development. The communique added that the MILGEM Class Corvette would be one of the most technologically advanced surface platforms of the Pakistan Navy fleet.

“Equipped with state-of-the-art weapons and state-of-the-art sensors, the aircraft includes surface-to-air, surface-to-air missiles and a command and control system,” the official statement said. “The inclusion of these ships in the Pakistan Navy will significantly enhance the capabilities of the Pakistan Navy and help maintain peace, security and balance of power in the Indian Ocean region.” Earlier, Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works Managing Director Rear Admiral Athar Saleem in his welcome address highlighted that Karachi Shipyard is fully self-sufficient and the government and Pakistan Navy in the defence shipbuilding industry itself. “It is on track to meet the goals of dependency,” he stressed and added that the launch of the great project with the brotherly country of Turkey would open new avenues for further cooperation in the field of construction of domestically built warships in Pakistan. The purpose of building corvettes in Pakistan is to further hone the capabilities of the local shipbuilding industry and Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works, it added. It maintained that the ship is equipped with stealth technology and is being built according to the standards of modern ships. “The second MILGEM Class Corvette would be handed over to the Pakistan Navy in the early months of 2024,” the statement said. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of ASFAT Esad Akgün in an interview described the keel-laying ceremony as “beautiful”.

“Today, we laid the keel of 3rd Ship of PN MILGEM Project and the block we saw at the slipway is not just a pile of steel, it’s the great step of giant collaboration between the two brother country, through ASFAT and Pakistan Navy,” Akgün added. He further said that ASFAT is a part of Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Turkey, and vested the competency of being a company, which can dynamically manoeuvre with flexibility together with its highly capable workers. “In order to serve efficiently, we have established ASFAT Pakistan to be able to integrate all defence capabilities of both nations,” he said, “We will be there at the disposal of Pakistan armed forces to facilitate every aspect of defence cooperation of our nations.” “In order to increase our capabilities, we are obliged to take advantage of mutual capabilities, to give strength to each other, he said, adding, “This is the purpose of ASFAT, this is my mission.” Akgün added: “We are bound to work hard together, embrace each other and participate in many ceremonies like this in the future. We will not hesitate, not waiver and never think twice in our endeavour.” “In our project there are many stakeholders who support us both in Turkey and in Pakistan and I also want to thank them for the spirit of one team working,” he said. “Today I pray Almighty to give us strength and give us light to walk our path for a great partnership. May Allah protect these ships we are witnessing the births today.”

Source: tribune.com.pk; 25 October 2020

SHIPPING, PORTS AND OCEAN ECONOMY

SEVEN HELD AFTER BRITISH ARMY BOARDS THREATENED OIL TANKER IN ENGLISH CHANNEL

- Agence France Presse

British soldiers on Sunday boarded an oil tanker off England's south coast and detained seven suspects, the defence ministry said, after the crew were forced to take shelter from stowaways who threatened them. The alert had been raised for the welfare of the crew of the Nave Andromeda tanker around 1000 GMT after they were forced to retreat to a safe area. "In response to a police request, the Defence Secretary and Home Secretary authorised Armed Forces personnel to board a ship in the English Channel... that was subject to suspected hijacking," the Ministry of Defence posted on Twitter. "Armed forces have gained control of the ship and seven individuals have been detained," the ministry said, adding that the crew were "safe and well". Stowaways "had made verbal threats towards the crew" but "no-one has been reported injured", police in the southern county of Hampshire said earlier, adding that they had imposed a three-mile (five kilometres) exclusion zone around the tanker. The ship was around six miles off the Isle of Wight on England's south coast, police added. Britain's coastguard and border protection agencies were called in to help defuse the incident.

A coastguard spokesman said two helicopters had been sent to support the police. Law firm Tatham & Co., which represents the ship's owners, told the BBC that the incident was "100 percent not a hijacking". Rather, the stowaways resisted being locked in a cabin after being discovered, the lawyers added. A source close to the shipping company also told the BBC that crew had been aware of stowaways on board for some time, but that they had turned violent as the vessel approached Britain. The crew then retreated to the ship's secure citadel, where attackers are unable to enter, added the source. The boat left Nigeria last week carrying 42,000 tonnes of crude oil and was due to dock in Southampton earlier Sunday.

This story was produced by AFP.

Source: [barrons.com](https://www.barrons.com); 25 October 2020

INDIA'S CABOTAGE POLICY CHANGE FAILS TO LIFT DIRECT CARRIER LOADINGS

- Bency Mathew

India's cabotage liberalization — enacted in May 2018 with a broader government goal to encourage more direct carrier calls — was seen as a game-changing maritime reform, but a JOC.com analysis of new port data after two down years does not paint an upbeat picture for the country's overall port flow efficiency. With the policy modification, foreign-flagged liners became free to transport laden export-import containers for transshipment and empty containers for repositioning between Indian ports without any specific permission or license, thus paving the way for more cargo aggregation opportunities. Across "major public" ports, container volumes rose 2 percent in fiscal year 2019-2020 to 10 million TEU from 9.8 million TEU a year earlier, but the volume of containers that enjoyed origin-to-destination port pairings — without the need for intermediary calls — saw a dip. Fiscal 2019-2020 direct movement slid to 5.77 million TEU from 5.89 million TEU in 2018-19, according to the analysis. In contrast, foreign transshipment continued at the same pace. Of the 10 million TEU, 2.93 million TEU, or 30 percent, found their way into the destinations via hub ports in the region, mainly Colombo, Sri Lanka; Singapore; and Port Klang, Malaysia. That share is relatively unchanged from 2018-19 when relayed movement stood at 2.96 million TEU.

At the same time, albeit an early measure of the impact, data provides two positive omens for India's containerized supply chains — a slowdown in cargo transshipped at Colombo, while others captured more, and a sharp rebound in coastal activity. Colombo's share of Indian transshipment cargo fell to 1.3 million TEU from 1.4 million TEU in 2018-19, an outcome that could be attributed to Hapag-Lloyd and Ocean Network Express (ONE) jointly opening a South India–Europe routing last year. Reflecting short-sea network improvements, coastal movement or intra-country transportation swelled 25 percent to 1.28 million TEU.

Local ship owners opposed to cabotage liberalization

From an industry perspective, the analysis could draw questions around elevated direct shipping opportunities often advocated by the Container Shipping Lines Association (CSLA), the umbrella body of foreign liners in India, along with grist for the Indian National Shipowners Association (INSA) — a representative body of local ship owners who have been opposing the abolition of cabotage restrictions on coastal trades. "The fact that the relaxation for foreign ships to carry coastal feeder traffic has not led to advantages for India on the whole is not surprising," Anil Devli, CEO of INSA, told JOC.com. "While the objective of this was that since main lines would carry their own laden and empty containers between two Indian ports, they would save freight and repositioning costs. However, none of this has been passed onto the shippers or consignees, and the trade has seen no benefit at all due to this [reform]." Efforts to seek comment from major foreign liners were unsuccessful. Compounded by COVID-19-linked disruptions and a sudden spurt in exports, Indian shippers are facing the dual headwinds of heightened carrier capacity shortages and high freight

rate increases. That hard-pressed market environment can only offer more ground for foreign transshipment, amplifying the Indian exporter-import community's perennial concerns over logistics costs and transit times.

Source: joc.com; 22 October 2020

SORT YOUR SHIPS OUT: PROTESTORS DENOUNCE UN SHIPPING AGENCY OVER CLIMATE FAILURE

- Nishan Degnarain

The London Headquarters of the UN shipping agency, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), was besieged by ocean and climate protestors on Monday, decrying the agency's failure to act on climate change and ocean pollution. The London Embassies of Panama and Japan were also focal points for the protests, given their powerful influence over the IMO as 'Tier A' countries on the ten-country 'Tier A' IMO Council. Japan has even greater influence on climate outcomes as it also controls the powerful environmental committee at the IMO and has long been seen to favor its domestic shipping industry with lower emission standards. Ironically, most of Japan's ships are registered in either Panama or the Marshall Islands, with both nations known as 'Flags of Convenience,' essentially offshore tax havens for shipping. There are six main 'Flags of Convenience' countries are responsible for 70% of global shipping (and ship carbon emissions), and have weaker ship safety and environmental standards.

The largest ship registry, Panama, is often seen as speaking on behalf of corporate Japan at IMO meetings, to keep ship standards low and allow more polluting vessels. Monday's protests, led by new environment group Ocean Rebellion, come as country delegates to the IMO met virtually this week for an important final talks to set targets for the amount of pollution global shipping will be allowed to produce. These talks will decide greenhouse gas emission targets for the next ten years, and essentially will determine whether the world stays within the Paris Agreement boundaries or not.

The emission targets are expected to be publicly announced on Friday October 23rd, ahead of the final round of talks on November 16-20 to finalize implementation. According to Clive Russell, a spokesperson at Ocean Rebellion who helped organize Monday's protests, "Ocean Rebellion organized three protests against the IMO. Firstly at the IMO, then at the Panama Embassy and finally at the Japan Embassy. By linking these three polluting protagonists Ocean Rebellion is pointing where the power lies – not with a UN international body acting on humanities' behalf, but at a UN international body regulating on behalf of two nations and the shipping and fossil fuel industry." The European Union has already expressed its lack of confidence in the IMO and are moving forward with a proposals to include shipping in its carbon trading markets, as well as introducing a higher set of emission standards, called Emission Control Areas. This raises the possibility that other regions may do the same, given the weak leadership of the IMO on climate and environmental issues, and this could

eventually lead to the break up of the IMO in favor of more responsive, regional shipping regulatory organizations.

A weak international regulator on climate

The IMO has been the focus for several major protests recently over its abdication of responsibilities toward the climate crisis. In 2015, while the rest of the world signed up to nationally defined carbon targets through the Paris Agreement, global shipping unilaterally decided to opt out. As shipping transports 90% of the global economy, this was a major omission for greenhouse gas emissions. Under pressure from environmental protestors, the shipping industry (through the IMO) then announced a new voluntary climate deal in 2018. Scientists have criticized the 2018 deal for having targets set so long term in the future (2050), that the actions are almost meaningless. Now, global shipping have continued to undermine confidence that the industry can regulate itself, by seeking to renege on this 2018 agreement and introduce even weaker emission targets, that effectively mean ship operators have to do relatively little to their existing fleets. As part of the protests, Clive Russell was very clear on Ocean Rebellion's two immediate demands from the IMO.

“First, it is to Stop Shipping Pollution: We know there's a concerted effort by Japan (chair of the IMO's Environment Committee) and Panama (Category 'A' member via its 'Flag of Convenience') to make sure business-as-usual is the order of the day. We demand the IMO at least brings shipping in line with the Paris Agreement, burning the cheapest, dirtiest, fuels on the high seas must stop now. Second, it is to Spill Truth Not Oil: Japan and Panama have too much power at the IMO, neither country can be trusted with this power. The Wakashio spill in July is yet another example of this abuse of power. The desire by all parties to cover up the nature of the spill and why it happened shows the real intent of the IMO – to act only for the shipping economy and not for the common oceans heritage of humankind. We believe the IMO is unfit to regulate this space. Either the IMO focusses on the ecological impact of shipping now or gifts this authority to an organization that can. The public deserves to know what the IMO is doing, we will continue to hold them to account and throw light on their murky activities.” Now, global shipping have continued to undermine confidence that the industry can regulate itself, buy looking renege on this 2018 agreement and introduce weaker emission targets. Shipping is world's sixth Largest Polluter. Global shipping is the sixth largest emitter of carbon dioxide. In addition, global shipping's harmful fuels have also been a leading cause of acid rain around the world, through its high sulfur content. The heavy fuels used in global shipping accounts for 20% of global sulfur emissions and is estimated to cost the lives of 60,000 a year, including hundreds of thousands of long term respiratory illnesses around ports around the world and among seafarers who serve on these ships. Emissions are governed by the \$78 million a year UN agency, the International Maritime Organization, 75% of whose fees are paid for by taxpayers around the world. The IMO talks this week had already been marred by concerns that Japan, Panama and Norway were attempting to undermine the Paris Agreement by introducing a measure that would only achieve 25% of the target needed to meet the Paris Agreement, and even then that enforcement would begin a decade later, in 2030, rather than next year. The centerpiece of this proposal (submitted by Japan) is called EEXI. Ocean Rebellion have likened this that to the fact that 'EEXI = Extinction,' and projected this against the Japanese Embassy. France's President

Macron had also been heavily criticized for appearing to support this position, and effectively doing a u-turn on France's previous position after announcing last year that he would be taking a strong stance on clean fuels for shipping.

Japan and Panama At Fault

The embassies of Japan and Panama were also targeted by protestors, angry that the UN shipping agency had been captured by large shipping interests dominated by these two countries. Panama is the world's largest registrar of vessels. Many of the vessels registered in Panama are actually built, owned and operated from Japan, which is why Panama's voice in the UN IMO is often seen as speaking for corporate Japan. Both Panama and Japan have one of the ten cherished 'Tier A' country status at the IMO, that give them extraordinary influence over environmental and safety issues, and where a country's vote in the IMO is essentially weighted based on how large a country's fleet is (tonnage). So with Panama having 20% of global tonnage in the world, one vote by Panama is effectively equivalent to one fifth the rest of the world. Actually, it's worse than this. In order for environmental laws to be enforced, they have to be approved by countries that represent over 50% of the world's shipping tonnage. This means, a vote by three countries - Panama, Liberia and Marshall Islands, who alone represent 50% of global tonnage - becomes critical to get international environmental pollution legislation ratified. With large foreign fleets registered in Panama (approximately 12,000 of the 60,000 very largest ships in the world), Panama has little interest to see rigorous environmental standards be developed or enforced. It is estimated that by opting out of the Paris Agreement, Panama has avoided the \$15 billion a year in a carbon levy that it would have had to pay for ships it has responsibility for.

Panama-registered vessels have already been responsible for some of the biggest maritime accidents in 2020 already:

- The MV Wakashio oil spill in Mauritius in August. Even the preliminary accident reports from Panama's accident inspectors (Panama Maritime Authority) has raised eyebrows where Panama falsely blamed poor weather, when satellite analysis clearly reveals that conditions were calm.
- The Panama-registered oil tanker, the MT New Horizon, that had an explosion in its engine just 40 miles off the coast of Sri Lanka and risked spilling 2 million barrels of oil along Sri Lanka's coast last month. This was for a vessel that was not even supposed to stop in Sri Lanka and was passing from Kuwait through to India.
- The Panama-registered Gulf Livestock 1, that was caught dramatically heading into the eye of Typhoon Maysak last month, with the loss of 40 crew and 6000 cattle. Three crew were rescued and have expressed surprise that more crew were not found as all had apparently been wearing life jackets - another safety feature that Panama is responsible for inspecting and ensuring is up to code.

Protestors symbolically released 1000 liters of plant-based water soluble oil outside the Panama Embassy, after the 1000 tons that was leaked into Mauritius' coral lagoons. This was almost 300,000 gallons, though the final numbers have not yet been released by the shipowner, Japan-based Nagashiki Shipping. The protestors then

cleaned up this water soluble oil after their protest both outside the IMO and outside the Panama Embassy. They had also been joined by performers from Apocalypse Theatrics who were dressed in black to represent the oil slick.

The protestors then cleaned the water soluble oil, with the message “We clear up our oily mess and so should you,” which was a reference to the Wakashio shipping disaster in Mauritius where the Government of Panama has been criticized for not doing enough to ensure safe standards for the vessel being under the country’s flag, and amid accusations of attempting to cover up what really happened on board.

Japan protests

By the evening, the protestors had moved onto the Japanese Embassy, where they projected a series of lights with messages against the Embassy. The new Japanese Prime Minister, Yoshide Suga, has barely been in role for a month, and has already been criticized for supporting policies that were behind several major ocean disasters and marine pollution events in recent months. Suga had served for eight years under previous Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who stepped down in August 2020, around the same time as the Mauritius oil spill.

Some of Japan’s most notable missteps have included:

- Co-ordinating a disastrous oil spill response in Mauritius, that deliberately excluded local expertise in preference of Japanese consultants who exacerbated the oil spill, salvage and clean up, amid concerns of a cover up to protect Japanese corporate interests.
- Revealing plans to release 1.2 million tons of radioactive Fukushima water back into the ocean, following the 2011 earthquake and tsunami.
- Ignoring appeals by the families of 40 missing crew in the Panama-registered Gulf-Livestock 1 cattle ship, that sunk off Japan’s coast and whom families have accused of not performing a through Search and Rescue operation in the proper locations.
- Deciding in 2019 to unilaterally leave an almost 40 year old international agreement among 160 countries to stop commercial whaling, and has already begun commercial whaling operations of these endangered species.
- Japan’s stance on climate and maritime pollution at the IMO has deliberately undermined substantial progress, as four alternatives were considered a lot more plausible for how to achieve a transition to a low carbon future for global shipping.
- Encouraging political interference in the once neutral scientific council of Japan, prompting concerns that politics and geopolitics are now trumping science, amid a rush to increase the militarization of Japan, that also acts as a

fiscal stimulus for Japanese shipyards. Several of Japan's Nobel Prize Winners have already expressed their concerns about this interference.

Japan has several of the largest shipyards and ship operators in the world, and has been strongly lobbying for lower environmental and climate standards in shipping for years. Japan also chairs the powerful environmental committee that will decide the climate target for the next decade. Specifically on Japan's role in the Mauritius oil spill, Ocean Rebellion's Clive Russell was very clear. "Without wishing to comment on technical salvage issues, Japan has a moral duty to fully clean up its own mess right now. From a simple sense of honor they need to throw everything into saving Mauritius from further damage by the Wakashio, and fixing the damage Japan has already done. Japanese foot dragging over remedies is nationally embarrassing, and can only harm Japan's reputation, plus, much more importantly, further harm the innocent people of Mauritius who cannot afford and do not deserve this." Deep Ocean Explorer Dr Sylvia Earle has already called for the sunken front section of the Wakashio to be picked up off the floor of the ocean and taken to a shipyard where it should be properly disposed of.

Role of France's President Macron in the spotlight

French President Emmanuel Macron has also come under fire for watering down French proposals for strict climate standards and appears to have fallen in line with a Japanese proposal that will only meet 25% of the Paris level climate commitment, and will only start being enforced in 2030, rather than within two years as other countries had proposed. The protestors highlighted that there had already been nine major oil spills around the world in 2020, amid a rise in maritime accidents this year. This comes as another oil tanker, the Nabarima, is at risk of capsizing in the Caribbean, prompting anger by fishermen in Trinidad and Tobago. The Nabarima is owned by Venezuela's state oil company in partnership with Italian energy giant, Eni.

Could there be a link to Covid-19, or have safety standards on ships been falling?

Other environmental NGOs abandon Mauritius

What was also notable about Monday's protest was the emergence of a new voice for the ocean. Many of the world's largest environmental NGOs, who often earn hundreds of millions of dollars in corporate partnerships, have essentially moved back to business as usual campaigns around plastic straw bans, and shied away from the bigger issues that can drive meaningful change. Small scale, artisanal Mauritian fishermen and citizens have felt abandoned by the many international organizations, such as the United Nations agencies, other major Western Governments (who do not have a stake in the outcome of the oil spill investigation) and international environmental NGOs. Shipping is a major industry that needs sophisticated thinking around systemic change, not superficial marketing slogans around plastic straws. What has happened in Mauritius is the classic Development Aid tale of rapid response when a story is in the media headlines, then swiftly moving on to the next fashionable topic, leaving coastal communities to suffer for decades to come. Just ask those who were impacted by the Solomon Trader in the Solomon Islands last year.

Refreshing new environmental leadership emerging

What was noticeable about this week's protest was the emergence of a new form of leadership with Ocean Rebellion. A spinoff from Extinction Rebellion, they appear to be targeting the bigger, more ambitious challenges of the ocean industry, where other NGOs had been afraid to tread. Clive Russell explains the goals of Ocean Rebellion, "The ocean is a peripheral notion to most people, only those with a connection to it understand its fundamental importance – if the sea dies, we die. Ocean Rebellion wants everyone to hear this alarm call. And if we can come together to fight the cascading marine geophysical and biodiversity breakdown of our ocean, maybe we can begin to understand the borderless nature of our shared world.

We have three demands:

1. Tell the truth: About the destruction of the oceans
2. Act now: Reverse drivers of warming, ocean acidification, sea level rise and ecological collapse by 2025
3. Take Control: United Nations to govern our common oceans heritage for the benefit of humankind, especially indigenous coastal communities. Not for the benefit of industry or finance."

Ocean Rebellion join the ranks of Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd, whose more pointed campaigns at various brands, use of environmental law and investment in robust science, have all appeared to have had the greatest impact in shifting the environmental needle. Since the Mauritius oil spill, Ocean Conservancy and WWF have also made statements about the global shipping industry. However, most of the other environmental NGOs have preferred to stick with their 'feel good' campaigns of plastic straws (amid a coronavirus pandemic that is creating another plastic pollution catastrophe) rather than address the systemic risks to the world's oceans. This comes after a series of investigations into the state of the world's environmental NGOs over the summer following the Black Lives Matter marches revealed major shortcomings with most environmental organizations. These investigations showed the lack of youth in key leadership positions (most Senior Executive Team and Boards were in their fifties, sixties or seventies), mainly male (though there have been some welcome changes in senior leadership positions in the past 12 months), were predominantly white and lacking in any form of innovation or technological prowess in how to address complex systemic change in the planet's environment. Traditional tools from the dawn of the internet 25 years ago cannot still be the main thrust of a modern environmental movement, as it appears to be. Today's ocean and climate crisis is as much about the failures of some large environmental organizations as it is about the sophisticated lobbying efforts by the world's shipping and oil industry.

Combating the shipping lobby's sophisticated greenwashing campaign

In the past five years, the shipping lobby has attempted to become a lot more sophisticated in greenwashing their industry. Through corporate partnerships with international organizations like World Ocean Council, the World Economic Forum,

the UN Global Compact, Norway's High Level Panel on a Sustainable Ocean Economy, the World Resources Institute, Norway's billionaire-backed Rev Ocean, MSC, the shipping lobby has attempted to deflect attention away from the impact their industry is having on the planet. A series of polite sounding 'White Papers' give the impression of an industry that has cleaned up its act. The reality - from what was seen in Mauritius - could not be further from the truth.

Global shipping in crisis: leaders ignore the S.O.S.

Over the course of 2020, global shipping has progressively slipped into a more perilous state, exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, and systematic issues that have long gone unaddressed. Maritime analysts like Captain John Konrad at gCaptain have been highlighting the four big issues that have become emergencies in their own right in 2020:

- Sustainability
- Ship safety
- Gender
- Diversity

Need for new ocean leadership

This highlights the need for new leadership for how the world's oceans are governed. It will take leadership that is younger, more diverse and empowered with the latest technologies. Relying on systems and bureaucracy designed decades ago is no longer relevant for the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. This is what Ocean Rebellion is starting to highlight with their campaigns.

Putting faith of 90% of the global economy into the hands of a UN agency captured by global shipping (the IMO), the low credibility of ship accident reports from Panama, Japan's non-scientific based approaches to climate change or oil spill clean ups, a maritime insurance cartel that shipowners own and has rejected EU Competition Investigations, and 70% of world trade being registered in just six 'flags of conveniences' cannot be a sustainable future. It is this systemic failure that has prompted the Pope and UN Secretary General to call global shipping a 'humanitarian disaster.' It is a disaster of their industry's own making. The G20 intervened with tax havens in 2008, global climate in 2015, and have been dabbling in oceans since 2018. If these leaders are unable to take on global shipping, then it raises the question whether they too have been taken in by some of the sophisticated greenwashing that global shipping has engaged in, and whether a leadership refresh is also needed here as well.

Source: [forbes.com](https://www.forbes.com); 21 October 2020

ENVIRONMENT GROUPS LAUD PNP MARITIME GROUP'S QUICK ACTION

ENVIRONMENT groups have lauded the Philippine National Police (PNP) Maritime Group for apprehending commercial fishing vessels in the municipal waters of Languyan, Tawi-Tawi. According to a joint statement issued by the environment groups Oceana, Environmental Legal Assistance Center, Philippine Earth Justice Center and Pangisda Natin Gawin Tama, the constant monitoring of the PNP Maritime Group had led to the capture of five light boats — LB Khalil 6, LB Khalil 4, LB Rain, LB Balyena 7 and LB Yaz. The vessels were apprehended for fishing using super lights, which is strictly prohibited by law. “This would not be possible without the effort and strict monitoring of the police maritime team led by BGen. Omega Jireh D. Fidel, director of the Maritime Group, PNP and the first special operations unit of the Philippine National Police Maritime Group led by LtCol. Fernando Cunanan Jr.,” the statement said.

The environment groups said despite the threat of the coronavirus, the PNP Maritime Group tried to implement local laws including the Fisheries Code as amended by Republic Act (RA) 10654. Section 98 of the Amended Fisheries Code bans the use of super lights or fishing light attractor within municipal waters and bays, especially in municipal waters. Local ordinances allowing fishing within the 10.1-to-15-kilometer portion of the municipal waters should comply with the requisites under RA 10654, the statement said. “The amended Fisheries Law requires harvest control mechanisms to limit fishing efforts based on the health of fishing grounds. The local government units, in collaboration with national agencies, have the duty to determine proper harvest control rules and reference points as well as establish a catch documentation system in place for the management of their municipal waters,” noted Gloria Estenzo Ramos, Oceana vice president. Under RA 10654, a vessel monitoring system is also required for commercial fishing vessels to prevent their illegal intrusion into municipal waters. The Department of Agriculture issued the vessel monitoring rules under Fisheries Administrative Order 266, published on Oct. 15, 2020. These measures for coastal local authorities to be effective managers in regulating and monitoring fishing grounds are in accordance with the Implementing Guidelines of the Department of the Interior and Local Government Memorandum Circular 2018-59 on regulation and monitoring of fishery activities in municipal waters, and Memorandum Circular 2018-147 on implementation of the Fisheries Compliance Audit. “By protecting the municipal waters from illegal fishing encroachment, we are protecting the constitutionally guaranteed rights of the marginal fisher folks to the preferential use of their traditional fishing grounds. There is no level playing field when the banned commercial fishing is tolerated, or worse, allowed, as the municipal fisher folks’ sustainable fishing method, such as hook-and-line, is no match to the sophisticated and highly efficient fishing gears employed by commercial fishing vessels, such as the super lights,” the statement said.

Source: manilatimes.net; 22 October 2020

CAT AND MOUSE ON THE HIGH SEAS: ON THE TRAIL OF CHINA'S VAST SQUID FLEET

- Dan Collyns

The ocean is as black as chipped obsidian, yet whichever way you look dozens of bright lights illuminate the water and the night sky. Nearly 400 nautical miles from the South American mainland, the crew of a Peruvian coastguard ship count more than 30 Chinese squid boats lighting up the sea like a city at night. Some of the boats shine luminous green, others glow blinding white like an alien spacecraft in a movie. Rugged along each side of the ships, incandescent lamps attract giant squid near the surface, where they can be hauled from the ocean by long metal arms jutting over the water.

The coastguard cutter *Río Cañete* drifts within 100 metres of a squid jigger, and the men on each boat gaze at each other across the water. The Chinese fishermen work in silence; the crew of the Peruvian boat is also hushed – none of them has witnessed such a scene before. “This is just part of a considerable fleet off our coastal waters,” says Commander Eduardo Atkins, looking out from the bridge of the 55-metre patrol boat. “They’ve always been off our coasts, from Ecuador to Argentina, [but] this time there’s been more media attention and the public feel affected. Our job is to dissuade them from entering our maritime domain.” The Guardian recently joined the Peruvian coastguard on a four-day patrol into international waters which came amid growing tension over the presence of the huge Chinese fleet off the coast of South America – some of the richest fishing grounds in the world. More than 250 Chinese ships were first detected in July as they skirted territorial waters off the Galápagos Islands, stirring outrage in Ecuador and raising global concern about the practices of the world’s largest distant-water fishing fleet. Hawkeye 360, a radio frequency data analytics firm, reported that boats were “going dark” by switching off their AIS satellite tracking and entering the islands’ exclusive economic zone. “We found multiple examples of maritime radio frequency activity that is within the Galápagos exclusive economic zone adjacent to the Chinese fleet,” said HawkEye 360’s CEO, John Serafini. “These signals don’t align with any AIS tracking. Although the activity could represent legitimate vessels, at the very least it is suspicious behaviour,” he said.

The hunt for Han Feng 806

Earlier that day, the *Río Cañete* heaved and shuddered through the machine-grey waves as a coastguard officer read out ships’ names from the radar scanner. Commander Atkins steered the cutter south-west directly towards the cluster of Chinese vessels. “We can clearly see the name of the ship Hangong Yu 303,” he said into a radiotelephone, reading out its coordinates on the ship’s bridge. Then it came into view: the Hangong Yu 303 was a large red oil tanker, and it was refueling a smaller squid jigger, pipes connecting the two across the waves. Atkins dispatched coastguard officers in one of the cutter’s two RIBs (rigid inflatable boat) to get a closer look, but

the fishing boat quickly disconnected from the tanker and headed off in the other direction.

The Chinese ships regularly refuel on the open ocean in order to extend their voyage as long as possible, said Atkins. “It’s not illegal but it’s considered bad practice,” he added through his white Covid face mask. “They can be here for months and months, possibly changing their crews, but the boats remain here in the South Pacific.” After more than 30 years with the coastguard, he could not hide his unease at the scale of the Chinese presence in the South Pacific, which has grown by roughly four times in nine years, according to Global Fishing Watch. “They have factory boats which process the catch and the product arrives packaged and ready to eat in China,” he said. It was one of these mother ships that Atkins wanted to find. He could see Han Feng 806, a refrigerated container ship, or reefer, on the radar to the south-west but as he turned the cutter to give chase, the factory ship steered a course further out to sea. Han Feng 806 stayed just out of reach. The following day, Atkins changed course, steering east and then north, along the the 200-nautical mile limit of Peruvian waters. The cutter’s twin 800 horsepower engines powered it smoothly along with the Humboldt current which swells up from Antarctica bringing nutrient-rich cold water along the coasts of Chile and Peru. The current gives its name to the species of giant squid which flourishes in its waters. But there is genuine concern among local fishing associations that China’s harvesting of the Humboldt squid will inevitably hurt Peru’s fishery exports, of which the squid accounts for 43%. “It’s an open secret that every year vessels mainly from China ... come just at the edge of the 200-mile mark off Peru to extract this resource,” said Cayetana Aljovín, president of Peru’s National Fishing Society. While South American countries impose quotas on their Humboldt squid catches, there are no limits on vessels in international waters. About 800,000 tonnes of the fast-growing, highly migratory species are caught annually. Overfishing of the squid could have an impact across the eastern Pacific, said Gustavo Sánchez, a marine biologist studying the species with Japan’s Hiroshima University. “These squid might have more than a single genetic population cohabiting in the eastern Pacific waters, implying that overexploitation in international waters does not only mean fewer squid for Peru but also squid less resilient to environmental change over a more extended region,” he said.

The Rosario

There was nothing on the horizon as the coastguard cutter surged forward under an overcast sky. Petrels and shearwaters skimmed the swell and occasionally flying fish launched themselves before the bow. A sperm whale spouted and then breached just two hundred metres from the ship, lifting spirits among the crew. “It’s a good omen, boys,” Atkins pronounced. Hours passed uneventfully before an officer with binoculars spotted something on the starboard bow. Nearly 100 nautical miles from land a little white fishing boat bobbed on the ocean, so small it barely registered on the radar. Atkins set a course towards it. A mechanical arm lowered the eight-man RIB off the stern and armed coastguards climbed down to it from a rope ladder, ready to inspect the suspect craft. The eight-metre Rosario had been drifting for two days with a broken outboard motor. All that its four-man crew – two seasoned Peruvian fishermen and two younger Venezuelans – had left was a large bunch of bananas, a bag of buns and

some bottles of Gatorade. But what shocked the coastguard officers was the Rosario's catch: hidden in nets stowed on the deck were four dead common dolphins, including one infant, and six sharks. Despite the mask over his face, it was clear that the skipper, Juan Ramos, knew he had been caught red-handed. Catching dolphins and selling their meat is illegal in Peru, but butchered porpoises are used as shark bait or sold as a delicacy known as muchame or chanco del mar on the black market. "Unfortunately we caught a few dolphins but that was not my intention," Ramos, 52, said. "If the motor was in good condition I would have got them out [of the net]," he insisted. But the coastguards doubted his story: someone had cut the tail fins from two of the dolphins to stop them breaking out of the net.

Junior officer Nicolás Castro asked Ramos for his permits and port departure documents, but he had none. Despite their predicament, Ramos, an old sea dog, said if they hoisted a sail they would be back in Ancón, their port of departure, in 12 days. "Before, years ago, we fished there by the shore. Now look where we are! If we fished by the shore now we wouldn't catch anything," he said. "This all comes from bad globalization. It's not just the Chinese squid fishing boats, there are tuna fishing boats from other countries too, they come and break our nets." He said small-scale fishermen could not compete. "The big problem in Peru is we don't have the technology. But [the foreign fleets] have factory ships, they can get anywhere and catch tonnes and tonnes [of fish] and take it away, processed." Matt Bjerregaard, a specialist in marine biodiversity and fisheries, said climate change is forcing artisanal fishermen to follow the fish into deeper water, further from shore. But large foreign fishing fleets are also to blame, he said, forcing fishermen "to search for new fishing areas, take longer to find their catch and, in turn, this has a negative impact on their livelihoods". Despite the seizure, the boat's net was still cast – and some 50 metres away a sea lion struggled to free itself. Castro jumped on to the RIB claspings a kitchen knife and motored towards the stricken animal which thrashed wildly, entangling itself more. "Come on, come on, you'll be free soon," said Castro, leaning over the bow to cut the green mesh as the sea lion bit furiously at a yellow float. Castro struggled for 20 minutes until finally the net could be hauled over the animal's head and it disappeared with a splash. "Go, go, be free, be free!" shouted Castro, brimming with emotion and trembling from the physical effort. "How beautiful, damn it! I'm thrilled I was able to free it." It was an emotional end to the encounter. The fishermen and their illegal catch were taken back to the Río Cañete to be taken to the harbour master's office in port and probably fined; their catch would be examined by experts from the fishing ministry. The Rosario and its broken motor was left adrift on the ocean. Meanwhile, the controversial Chinese fleet continued to move south, prompting Chile to announce that its navy would monitor its movements. "What began as an arrest for an illegal act became a search and rescue operation," said Atkins – pleased the mission had a satisfactory ending, but perhaps frustrated that he had to be content with the small fry while the big fish got away.

Source: [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com); 21 October 2020

MARINE ENVIRONMENT

THE OZONE HOLE OVER ANTARCTICA HAS GROWN MUCH DEEPER AND WIDER IN 2020

- Peter Dockrill - ScienceAlert

The hole in the ozone layer over Antarctica has expanded to one of its greatest recorded sizes in recent years. In 2019, scientists revealed that the Antarctic ozone hole had hit its smallest annual peak since tracking began in 1982, but the 2020 update on this atmospheric anomaly – like other things this year – brings a sobering perspective. "Our observations show that the 2020 ozone hole has grown rapidly since mid-August, and covers most of the Antarctic continent – with its size well above average," explains project manager Diego Loyola from the German Aerospace Center. New measurements from the European Space Agency's Copernicus Sentinel-5P satellite show that the ozone hole reached its maximum size of around 25 million square kilometres (about 9.6 million square miles) on 2 October this year. That puts it in about the same ballpark as 2018 and 2015's ozone holes, which respectively recorded peaks of 22.9 and 25.6 million square kilometres.

"There is much variability in how far ozone hole events develop each year," says atmospheric scientist Vincent-Henri Peuch from the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts. "The 2020 ozone hole resembles the one from 2018, which also was a quite large hole, and is definitely in the upper part of the pack of the last 15 years or so." As well as fluctuating from year to year, the ozone hole over Antarctica also shrinks and grows annually, with ozone concentrations inside the hole depleting when temperatures in the stratosphere become colder. When this happens – specifically, when polar stratosphere clouds form at temperatures below -78°C (-108.4°F) – chemical reactions destroy ozone molecules in the presence of solar radiation. "With the sunlight returning to the South Pole in the last weeks, we saw continued ozone depletion over the area," Peuch says. "After the unusually small and short-lived ozone hole in 2019, which was driven by special meteorological conditions, we are registering a rather large one again this year, which confirms that we need to continue enforcing the Montreal Protocol banning emissions of ozone depleting chemicals."

The Montreal Protocol was a milestone in humanity's environmental achievements, phasing out the manufacturing of harmful chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) – chemicals previously used in refrigerators, packaging, and sprays – that destroy ozone molecules in sunlight. While we now know that human action on this front is helping us to fix the Antarctic ozone hole, the ongoing fluctuations from year to year show that the healing process will be long. A 2018 assessment by the World Meteorological Organisation found that ozone concentrations above Antarctica would return to relatively normal pre-1980s levels by about 2060. To realise that goal, we have to stick to the protocol

and ride out the bumps, like the one we're seeing this year. While 2020's maximum peak isn't the largest on record – that was seen back in 2000, with a 29.9 million square kilometre hole – it is still significant, with the hole also being one of the deepest in recent years. Researchers say the 2020 event has been driven by a strong polar vortex: a wind phenomenon keeping stratospheric temperatures above Antarctica cold. In contrast, warmer temperatures last year were what brought about 2019's record-low ozone hole size, as scientists explained back then. "It's important to recognise that what we're seeing [in 2019] is due to warmer stratospheric temperatures," Paul Newman, the chief scientist for Earth Sciences at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Centre in Greenbelt, Maryland, said at the time. "It's not a sign that atmospheric ozone is suddenly on a fast track to recovery." While there may be no fast track, and we can likely expect a few more scary peaks in the years ahead, the Montreal Protocol has our back. We're going to get there one day if we hold true.

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Source: livescience.com; 23 October 2020

THE ANTARCTIC OCEAN IS IN CLIMATE CRISIS. THIS WEEK, THE WORLD COULD TAKE A BIG STEP TOWARDS PROTECTING ITS FUTURE

- Aryn Baker

Sixty years ago a dozen nations, including arch-rivals the United States and the Soviet Union, agreed to preserve the Antarctic continent as a place of peace, research and conservation. Commercial exploitation of its resources and its animals was forbidden. Yet much of the ocean that surrounds the territory does not have the same protections.

This will be up for discussion during a virtual meeting of the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) from 22-30 October. The Convention is meeting to discuss the region's future and will decide whether or not it's time to give some of the most biodiverse seas around Antarctica the same defenses as the land itself.

The timing couldn't be more vital. The combined threats of global climate change and industrial fishing are weakening the crucial ecosystems that lie within its waters. Record high temperatures are breaking up ice sheets that have lasted millennia. On Feb. 6, a weather station on the Antarctic Peninsula—the 1,500 km long finger of land that reaches towards South America—reported a record temperature high of 18.3°C. While members of a nearby scientific expedition researching penguin populations relished in the balmy weather, stripping down to t-shirts and bare chests, it was an ominous sign for a species better adapted to ice. Just a few days earlier the penguin researchers were reporting a 77% decline in some colonies. The peninsula isn't just one of the fastest warming places on earth. It's also home to some of the most exquisitely

specialized species on the planet. Among them is Antarctic krill—the tiny, shrimp-like crustaceans that collectively form the largest biomass on the planet and are the cornerstone of the global ocean food chain. Yet the encroachment of industrial fisheries into these waters is threatening their health, as well as the penguins, seals and whales that are sustained by them. CCAMLR was established in 1982 with a mandate to protect Antarctic marine life through sustainable fisheries. It governs by consensus, and regulates fishing through quotas. The current quota for krill across the entire fishing fleet is limited to less than .5% of the known biomass. That may not sound like much, but it can still have an outsize impact depending on where the krill is harvested, says Rodolfo Werner, an Argentina-based marine biologist who is currently advising the Pew Charitable Trust’s Antarctic Krill Conservation Project

“The question is not how much krill you catch, but when you catch it and where,” Werner says. Over the past decade, he says, the fishing fleets have been moving closer to areas around the Antarctic Peninsula that are used by penguins to forage during the breeding season. Seals and whales also compete for krill along those coasts, leading to even greater uncertainty about how much, exactly, is there. “It’s hard enough trying to determine how much krill we can allow the fisheries to take,” he says by phone. “When you throw in climate change and sea ice reduction, it gets even more complicated.” Rather than work by quotas, he says, a better solution would be to limit fishing access entirely in vital areas. And he is not the only one. The European Union, along with most other CCAMLR members, is calling for the entire Antarctic Peninsula —the northernmost tip of the sprawling continent— to be set aside as a Marine Protected Area (MPA), meaning that the area will be off limits for all kinds of commercial exploitation. The call is part of a global drive to set aside a full 30% of the oceans as conservation areas, where fish stocks and marine animals can recover from decades of overfishing, and go on to repopulate the rest of the ocean. Marine conservationist Cristina Mittermeier calls them “fish banks,” that grow with compound interest over time.

In 2011 CCAMLR committed to establish a network of nine large-scale marine protected areas around Antarctica. A decade later, only two have been implemented, including one at the Ross Sea that is twice the area of Texas and the largest such region in the world. This year the organization will consider a proposal by Argentina and Chile to create an MPA to protect a large section of the Antarctic Peninsula region, along with one for East Antarctica and another for the Weddell Sea.

The problem is that up until now, CCAMLR members Russia and China have blocked the proposals. Both countries are intent on expanding their regional fishing operations, and while MPAs won’t affect their quota, “China doesn’t want any restriction on access to resources anywhere,” says Werner, who has served on CCAMLR’s scientific committee for the past 17 years. “Setting up an MPA in Antarctica sets a precedent that could be replicated elsewhere on the high seas, and they see that as a threat to their sovereignty.” What happens on this remote continent will reverberate around the world, says Andrea Kavanagh, project director for the Pew Charitable Trust’s Protecting Antarctica’s Southern Ocean campaign. An MPA on its own can’t stop the impact of warming seas or plastic pollution, but by offering marine life respite from fishing pressures, it helps build resilience. “Designating the Antarctic Peninsula MPA would create a climate refuge for krill and penguins and could

permanently protect the region's unique marine ecosystem," says Kavanagh. Not only that, it can help mitigate the effects of climate change. When krill feed on phytoplankton, their carbon-rich waste sinks to the bottom of the ocean, where it stays for thousands of years. Scientists estimate that they sequester some 23 million tons of carbon emissions each year, equivalent to the output of six coal-fired power plants. Together, the East Antarctica, Antarctic Peninsula, and Weddell Sea MPAs would protect close to 1% of the ocean globally by covering approximately four million square kilometers. "Establishing this network of MPAs could be the single greatest act of ocean conservation in humankind, making this the greatest sanctuary on earth," says Mittermeier, whose organization SeaLegacy.Org is leading a petition campaign in support of the MPAs. "If we can't protect the most wild place on the planet, how can we protect ourselves?"

Source: [time.com](https://www.time.com); 20 October 2020

RESEARCHERS TO TRACK HOW COASTAL STORMS IMPACT GROUNDWATER QUALITY

- University Of Massachusetts Lowell

LOWELL, Mass. - UMass Lowell researchers are working to determine how severe coastal storms contribute to water pollution in an effort funded by a \$784,000 grant from the National Science Foundation. Led by UMass Lowell's James Heiss, assistant professor in the Department of Environmental, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, the team will use computerized sensors installed at sites along the shoreline to measure groundwater flow to track how such storms may affect the amount of saltwater in beach aquifers. The team is collaborating with UMass Lowell Computer Science Prof. Fred Martin to develop the sensor network. Important to maintaining a balanced ecosystem, beach aquifers are underground layers of rocks, sand and gravel that conduct saltwater and freshwater, and are important in filtering groundwater contaminants before they can discharge to the ocean.

While scientists understand how tides and seasonal changes in rainfall influence groundwater flow, far less is known about the effects of coastal storms, which bring pounding waves, heavy rains and beach erosion. "The response of beach aquifers to those interacting factors is not clear. This is what our research aims to find out," said Heiss, a Lowell resident. "Large-scale intrusion of saltwater is a major problem in many coastal communities and large cities that rely on groundwater as a source of drinking water. In beach aquifers, the increasing salinity will also likely influence the aquifers' ability to remove pollutants before flowing into the ocean." As sea level rises and coastal storms become more frequent and intense due to climate change, more seawater gets introduced into coastal aquifers, which may affect those ecosystem services, according to Heiss. Researchers from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution are working with UMass Lowell on the study. The team will analyze the effects of coastal storms on groundwater flow and the mixing patterns between seawater and fresh groundwater in beach aquifers. Nitrate, along with phosphorus,

mercury and other harmful chemical contaminants from human activities, are transported in groundwater to the sea, so it is important to understand the physical movement of that groundwater in these environments, according to Heiss. "Excess nitrogen in coastal waters can cause algal blooms, mass die-offs of fish and loss of biodiversity, which can impact the environment and coastal economies. Red tides, blue-green algae and cyanobacteria release toxins that can be harmful to humans, pets, fish, shellfish, marine mammals and birds," Heiss said.

The experiments will be conducted at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Field Research Facility in Duck, N.C., which has specialized equipment and dedicated beach access that features a long research pier that extends from the dune line into the Atlantic, according to Heiss. The researchers will install their network of sensors in monitoring wells on the beach next summer ahead of hurricane season. The wells and sensors will stay in place for a few months to record groundwater parameters at various depths as storms pass over the study site. The sensors will send the readings to an electronic data recorder positioned on the beach, which will transmit the information to a base station behind the dune line.

Source: eurekaalert.org; 20 October 2020

GEOPOLITICS

A ‘MISTAKE’ TO HAVE WALKED OUT OF QUAD, MALABAR EXERCISE IN 2008: AUSTRALIAN ENVOY BARRY O’FARRELL

- Suhasini Haidar

Australia should not have walked out of the Quad, and subsequently the Malabar exercises with India, but was “delighted” at New Delhi’s decision to invite it to participate in this year’s naval exercises in November, Australian High Commissioner to India Barry O’Farrell said. Referring to the his government’s announcement in 2008 that it would not participate in the Quad exercises with India, Japan and the United States, he said it probably became the reason India took three years to accept Australia’s request to rejoin the exercises, despite requests from 2017-2020. “I can say that, with the benefit of hindsight, clearly that it [withdrawing from Malabar] was a mistake. I suspect earlier in the piece, that became a stumbling block, and that was not forgotten in terms of reassembling Australia as part of that exercise,” Mr. O’Farrell said in an interview to The Hindu. Earlier this week, the Ministry of Defence announced that all four countries of the Quadrilateral would take part in the Malabar exercises scheduled at the end of November to be held in two phases on both sides of the Indian coastline in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. This will be the first such exercise after India signed logistical agreements with all Quad partners, and is expected to see greater interoperability and use of common military platforms.

China’s protests

While Australia pulled out from the grouping a decade ago after China’s protests at the time, India’s hesitation in reinviting it back to the exercises in the past few years was also understood to be over China’s sensitivities over a possible “military alliance” in the Indo-Pacific ranged against it. However, experts believe that growing concerns in both countries over China’s aggression in the Indo-Pacific and on the border with India have accelerated the pace of Quad cooperation this year. When asked if New Delhi’s turnaround this year was due to the stand-off at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and tensions with China, Mr. O’Farrell said that the decision was a reaction to “challenges in the neighbourhood” over a period of time, not the last few months. “I don’t think the invitation came about because of activities over the last couple of months [at the LAC], I think it’s been the changing environment in which we live, and the recognition by countries like India and Australia, that they have to step up in the neighbourhood to deliver the sort of world we want,” he noted. However, Mr. O’Farrell said Australia’s policy did not envision formalising the Quad in any way, contrary to statements from U.S. State department officials, who called for formalising and regularising the interactions on the platform. He said that Australia did not see the Quad, as U.S.

Secretary of State Pompeo asserted, as a “tool” to counter the challenge from China’s ruling Communist Party (CCP).

Positive agenda

“We have a positive agenda for the Quad, which is about shaping the neighbourhood in which we live, you know, a free, open and resilient Indo- Pacific, one where, you know, rules and norms apply and one where any disputes are resolved according to international law. It's been clear in the comments of the three foreign ministers, who are three-quarters of the Quad, that whatever we develop there is intended to be shared by all countries across the Indo Pacific, so we're not exclusivist,” he stated. India and Australia would continue talks on a trade deal, although they would be delayed until after the 15-nation Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) was completed later this year, which India decided to walk out from. Despite several requests from RCEP countries, especially Australia, the Modi government has refused to reconsider its decision, citing worries over Chinese goods flooding the Indian market. “RCEP will proceed. I understand and recognize and respect India's decision, and no one is forced to sign up to the agreement. It’s no secret that Australia was keen for India to be part of it. In the meantime, Australia will continue to engage with India bilaterally on a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA),” he said.

Full text of interview

It was a “mistake” for Australia to have walked out of the Quad and the Malabar exercise in 2008, says Australian High Commissioner Barry O’Farrell, as he welcomed India’s decision to invite Australia back to the exercises in November with the US and Japan.

The Quad foreign ministers meeting in Tokyo was followed up by India’s announcement that Australia has been invited to join the Malabar naval exercise this year. Would you say that as an arrangement, the quadrilateral between Australia-India-Japan-US is now on its way to being formalized?

I think it’s an evolving forum that, you know, brings like-minded democracies together, by looking at issues to work to work on common issues in the neighbourhood like maritime security, cyber, and in counter-terrorism. And as we saw [at the FM meet] is it’s moved into areas, you know, looking at vaccines, looking at maritime issues, looking at supply chains, critical minerals. So, it continues to be a diplomatic forum to discuss a shared outlook and shared interests within our region. It's not and I don't think it's planned to be a formal structure. But it will continue to see close partners come together to discuss common interests and outlooks and work on those for this region.

US Secretary of State Pompeo said that actually, he believes the Quad should collaborate to counter what he called the coercion by the Chinese Communist Party. How does Australia see the purpose of the Quad?

Well, as my Foreign Minister [Marise Payne] has said, and I'm very happy to quote her: We have a positive agenda for the quad, which is about shaping the

neighbourhood in which we live, you know, a free, open and resilient Indo-Pacific, one where, you know, rules and norms apply one where sovereign independence applies, and one where any disputes are resolved, according to international law. All I know is when the four foreign ministers get together, they are increasingly working collaboratively, aligning ourselves on issues that that are important to our neighbourhood at a time of unprecedented challenges, including the COVID challenge.

You said the Quad was a grouping of like-minded democracies, does that mean that certain (non-democratic) countries are disqualified from a future Indo-Pacific arrangement and which countries might join in the future?

We talk about people that share a vision. But we also make clear that ASEAN-led infrastructure is essential to the future of all the Indo-Pacific and in no way are we seeking to circumvent that. And critical to the resilient supply chain initiative that India, Australia and Japan have had discussions around. And it's been clear in the comments of the three foreign ministers, who are three quarters of the Quad, that whatever we develop, there is intended to be shared by all countries across the Indo-Pacific, so we're not exclusivist.

After years of requests from Canberra, India has finally agreed to invite Australia to the Malabar exercise. Why do you think it took so long?

You know, we all know that Australia withdrew from the Quad [In 2008, Australia pulled out of the Quad and Malabar exercise. From 2017 onwards, after the revival of the Quad, the Australian government had requested India to rejoin the exercises]. I can say that, with the benefit of hindsight, clearly that it was a mistake. I suspect earlier in the piece, that became a stumbling block, and that was not forgotten in terms of reassembling Australia as part of that exercise. The good news is that that hasn't stopped over the past six years, a quadrupling of the defence cooperation between India and Australia. I think that while there was this focus on for a number of years, whether or not Australia would be invited to rejoin the Quad. But that missed what was going on in the defence relationship. The AUSINDEX exercise last year was the largest joint exercise Australia has ever participated in. It was also the most complex involving submarine to submarine serials and P-8 maritime patrols across the Bay of Bengal. Now that is far bigger than any previous Malabar exercise. I haven't seen yet the scope for the two-part Malabar plan for next month, but we clearly welcome the opportunity to participate Malabar. It is a further sign of the deepening of the defence relationship between Australia and India. Whichever way you look at it, Malabar is a good thing. It'll enhance our capabilities in working with three close partners in the Indo-Pacific to deliver stability and security in the Pacific. But beyond Malabar, there has been a whole lot of work that I think is just as important, and in some instances more important than the Malabar. So, I'm delighted that that we've got past the Malabar [question] because we can, we can we can reflect on the broad, deeper defence relationship between our two countries and, and find ways to further extend those.

Do you think New Delhi's current concerns at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China played a part in its decision?

My view is that, you know, this was this was an invitation to be issued to Australia, not for Australia to demand of the other three partners. You know, it was their gift. I think

there's no doubt that over the last couple of years, given the increased challenges within the neighbourhood, the increased competition within the neighbourhood, that we probably all looked around and decided to work together with people that that have not just shared values, but also a shared vision for the region. I don't think the invitation came about because of activities over the last couple of months [at the LAC], I think it's been the changing environment in which we live, and the recognition by countries like India and Australia, that they have to step up in the neighbourhood to deliver the sort of world we want.

To turn to trade, despite repeated requests from other countries, including Australia, India has made it clear it will not join the 15-nation Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). Will RCEP go ahead, minus India, later this year?

Well, I think it's clear from what's been said today that RCEP will proceed, and that's a good thing. That's a good thing for the for the region. But as we're seeing in this, in this current world, you can have relationships at many levels. External Affairs Minister Jaishankar talks about "plurilateralism", and it's right, that there will be a variety of relationships. So, my view is RCEP will proceed. I understand and recognise and respect India's decision, and no one is forced to sign up to the agreement. It's no secret that Australia was keen on India to be a part of it. But you know, what's happened has happened. What's expected to happen later this year will occur. In the meantime, Australia will continue to engage with India bilaterally on a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA).

But won't bilateral trade take a back seat to trade between the RCEP nations, once that agreement is in place?

Australia will continue to look at putting effort in growing trade ties between India and Australia, regardless of what is happening elsewhere. You know, we can walk and chew gum at the same time. And my point is that given what COVID-19 has done to economies across the globe, given what it's doing to economies within the region, I am convinced that Australia's efforts to engage India in increased trade and commerce and importantly, investment will continue apace alongside our efforts with the rest of the world and the rest of the neighbourhood.

India's objections on RCEP weren't just to Chinese goods flooding the market, there were specific differences with Australia on Agriculture and Dairy product access. Can the two countries overcome bilaterally what they couldn't multilaterally?

I think sometimes it's easier to do it bilaterally than in a multilateral forum, because you're looking for the agreement of two people, as opposed to 15 or 16. I am optimistic, and some of that optimism comes from pomegranates. In August, Indian pomegranates were allowed into the Australian market for the first time. I know that we have made progress in some of the agricultural sectors, with some of the non-tariff barriers that had existed, I only see benefit in those things continuing forward. Do I believe there is going to be a breakthrough overnight? No, my view of life is that most things take time to work out. Now, whether it's Make in India or Atmanirbhar Bharat, Australia has elements that can assist India to achieve its economic vision. If India wants to succeed with its renewable energy mission with its batteries with its electric

vehicles, Australia can offer a reliable source of the rare earths and the critical minerals that are required to deliver that mission. We already have in Macquarie infrastructure group, the largest investor in Indian infrastructure in the world. That's an Australian company. We have the seventh largest pool of managed funds, our pension funds, and only on the eighth of October, we had a virtual interaction between six of our largest pension funds and the national investment in infrastructure fund on the opportunities that exist in India.

How much do you think the coronavirus challenge is going to actually be a driver of relations?

I think it's increased the opportunities. I recently met with, with your health minister, and one of the observations that he made that I'd already picked up from a couple of southern Indian investors was that both Australia and India during COVID-19 have accelerated the rollout of telemedicine digital health. And, you know, we're both big countries, you're a big country with a big population. We are a big country with a lot of remote areas with small communities, in both those countries, tele-health, digital medicine are important. The biggest lesson out of COVID-19 is in the non-medical area, which is the need for resilient supply chains, and for other reasons, also recognising the need for diversification of markets.

Source: [thehindu.com](https://www.thehindu.com); 23 October 2020

PH-JAPAN, US IN CONTRASTING SCS MOVES

- AFP

The Philippines and Japan have underlined the need for countries to stop any activity that might provoke tensions in the disputed South China Sea, saying the agreement negotiated by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China should be upheld. At the same time, the United States said Friday it would deploy Coast Guard patrol ships in the western Pacific to counter "destabilizing and malign" activities by China in disputed fishing grounds of the South China Sea. Accusing China of "illegal" and "unregulated" fishing, as well as "harassment" of fishing boats from regional countries, White House National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien said in a statement that the US Coast Guard "is strategically homeporting significantly enhanced Fast Response Cutters...in the western Pacific." These Sentinel class vessels will carry out maritime security operations, including helping fishing boats "in collaboration with regional partners who have limited offshore surveillance and enforcement capacity, and ensure freedom of navigation," he said. Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and Japanese Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi, in a video teleconference, also pointed out the importance of freedom of navigation in the disputed area.

"We call on concerned parties to desist from any action and activity that contravenes the ASEAN-China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, as these generate tension, mistrust and uncertainty, and threatens regional peace and stability," said Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana in a statement following the meeting. In a separate statement, Japan's minister of defense said apart from the South China Sea, the two officials also discussed the situation on the East China Sea

“in light of the current events occurring in the region.” Japan in May protested the sending of Chinese ships near the Senkaku Islands, a group of Japanese-controlled, Chinese-claimed uninhabited islets in the East China Sea. “They oppose any attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by coercion or any activities that escalate tensions, and reaffirmed the importance of a free and open maritime order based on the rule of law,” the statement released by the Philippine Department of National Defense read. The Philippines and Japan also affirmed their support for a peaceful resolution of territorial disputes in the resource-rich waters. Lorenzana had earlier stressed the importance of maintaining freedom of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea during his meeting with Australia’s defense minister also this week. The Philippines and Australia reiterated that disputes on the area should be resolved in compliance with international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The Philippines, three of its fellow ASEAN members (Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam), Taiwan and China have competing claims in the South China Sea. Washington regularly accuses China of breaking international law by sending its warships as escorts for Chinese fishing vessels into the fishing grounds of other countries. In July, US Defense Secretary Mark Esper slammed a “catalog of bad behavior” in the South China Sea over the previous months and accused the Chinese military of having sunk a Vietnamese fishing boat, harassing Malaysian oil and gas development and escorting Chinese fishing fleets into Indonesia’s exclusive economic zone. O’Brien added that the Coast Guard, which is under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), was also studying whether to permanently station several of its patrol ships in the area of American Samoa in the South Pacific. Last month, Indonesia protested about an incursion by Chinese coast guard ships in its exclusive economic zone, which is situated between its own territorial waters and international waters and where the state claims exclusive rights to exploit natural resources. China claims almost the whole of the South China Sea as its own, a claim contested by several countries including Malaysia, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Indonesia.

Source: manilastandard.net; 25 October 2020

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