

Volume 2 Number 7 July 2013

Indian Ocean Watch

A Monthly Newsletter on the Indian Ocean Region



INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE
STUDIES & ANALYSES

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This Newsletter tracks developments in the following countries of the Indian Ocean region

Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Yemen

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EDITOR'S NOTE

In the last month, there have been several significant developments relating to our areas of coverage. India and Australia agreed to strengthen bilateral maritime security cooperation and the two sides are scheduled to hold a joint naval exercise in 2015. The Indian Navy will participate in the International Fleet Review in Sydney later this year. China released a 'blue book' outlining its strategy to secure interests in the region and highlighting its commercial objectives over military ones. Separately, former president of the Maldives Maumoon Abdul Gayoom views the US rather than China as more likely to upset the balance of power in the Indian Ocean by seeking to set up a base on the island nation.

Seychelles has signed the UN Arms Trade Treaty that aims at regulating global trade in conventional arms. The country is among 155 others that have voted in support of the adoption of the treaty. Meanwhile, Australia has joined the Seychelles-based Regional Anti-Piracy Prosecutions and Intelligence Coordination Centre aimed at countering piracy, terrorism and narcotics trade in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Oman. In other maritime cooperation news, Yemen and Djibouti have agreed to cooperate on maritime issues affecting both countries, while Kenya has sought greater cooperation with India to address the threat of piracy emanating from the Somali coastline. Singapore's relative success with deterring hijacking incidents in the Strait of Malacca through a joint counter-piracy task force may prove useful to other countries battling piracy.

International maritime sanctions continue to affect the Iranian maritime industry with top foreign shipping lines having cut ties with the country. Iran's oil revenues have also declined drastically owing to lack of international insurers for its oil tankers, and a fall in number of customers.

We hope our readers find this issue useful!

Ruchita Beri

Editor

MARITIME SECURITY

India, Australia to strengthen maritime security cooperation

During a two-day visit by India's Defence Minister AK Antony to Australia, the two countries have agreed to strengthen their strategic partnership and defence cooperation. As part of this, the two sides will hold a joint naval exercise in 2015. India has also accepted an invitation for the Indian Navy to showcase its growing military capability at the International Fleet Review to be held in Sydney in October this year. The Indian Navy's participation is being seen as part of a strategy to contain the growing presence of the Chinese navy in the Indian Ocean region. Both sides have also agreed to continue consultations on issues relating to the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions through bilateral and multilateral forums including the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and the Indian Ocean Rim - Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC). Australia will chair the IONS next year, and is also scheduled to take over the IOR-ARC chair from India.¹

Former president of Maldives sees US as threat, not China

The former president of Maldives, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom has said that he feels it is the US rather than China that could upset the balance of power in the Indian Ocean by seeking to set up a base in his nation. He was responding to reports of the US and the Maldives discussing a Status of Force Agreement

(SOFA) that envisages a foothold for American forces in the heart of the Indian Ocean. The US embassy in Colombo has also acknowledged the discussion but clarified that there are no immediate plans for a permanent military base in the Maldives. Gayoom appreciated the role played by India, the third major player in the region. He said that he sees no threat from the Indian side.²

China releases 'blue book' on Indian Ocean plans

China has released its first 'blue book' on the Indian Ocean Region. The country has for the first time spelled out its strategy to secure its interests in the region. The book stresses that Beijing's interests in the region will be driven by commercial rather than military objectives as China seeks to deepen its economic engagements with the Indian Ocean Region's (IOR) littoral states. However, it warns that if countries like India, the US and China failed to engage with each other more constructively as their interests begin to overlap, the Ocean could end up "as an ocean of conflict and trouble". The book says that Beijing has trailed behind New Delhi and Washington in securing its interests in the region. The introduction of the book declares that China "has no Indian Ocean strategy," while India and the US have put forward their "Look East" policy and "pivot" or "rebalancing" in Asia. The book calls for China to be more proactive in securing its economic interests in the region.³

¹ "India, Australia raise the pitch on maritime cooperation", *The Hindu*, June 5, 2013 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-australia-raise-the-pitch-on-maritime-cooperation/article4783997.ece>

² "In Indian Ocean, threat is from U.S., not China, says Gayoom", *The Hindu*, June 7, 2013 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/in-indian-ocean-threat-is-from-us-not-china-says-gayoom/article4788579.ece>

³ "China details Indian Ocean strategy and interests", *The Hindu*, June 9, 2013 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/world/china-details-indian-ocean-strategy-and-interests/article4795550.ece>

Seychelles signs UN Arms Trade Treaty

Seychelles has signed the UN Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) which opened for signature at the United Nations in New York on June 3. Seychelles' permanent representative to the United Nations in New York said that the signing of the treaty means Seychelles' continued commitment for rule of law, and promotion of humanitarian law and human rights regionally and globally. The treaty, aimed at regulating the global trade in conventional arms, was adopted by the United Nations on April 2, 2013. Seychelles was among the 155 countries which voted in overwhelming support for the adoption. It welcomes the treaty's prohibition in exporting arms to a country if the weapons are intended to be used for genocide, or in violation of a UN arms embargo.⁴

India's INS Sukanya visits Seychelles on its National Day

Sukanya, an Indian offshore patrol ship, was a part of the Seychelles' National Day parade on June 18 with a marching contingent and the Indian naval band on June 18. After the parade, it undertook its task of surveillance of Seychelles' exclusive economic zone (EEZ) from June 19 to 25. The Indian Navy has been doing this for the past few years as part of a defence cooperation agreement between the two countries. Members of the Seychelles Coastguard also remain present on board during the EEZ surveillance where they are trained in navigation, seamanship etc. INS Sukanya, well equipped with state-of-the-art equipment and sensors, is a part of the Eastern Fleet of the Indian Navy.⁵

Joint exercise between EU NAVFOR and Mozambique Navy

The EU Naval Force (EU NAVFOR) Portuguese flagship, NRP Álvares Cabral, visited the port of Pemba in Mozambique from June 17-21. The ship and the crew were given a very warm welcome by Mozambican authorities and the local population. The EU NAVFOR Headquarters organised a Maritime Security Conference on board the ship on June 18 which was attended by representatives from the Mozambique government, armed forces, the police force and maritime related companies operating in the region. A Joint Maritime Security Exercise was also conducted between the EU NAVFOR flagship and the Mozambique Navy on June 19.⁶

Chinese Navy in Seychelles' national day for the first time, commander talks with the defence chief

Chinese soldiers took part in the Seychelles' National Day Parade for the first time this year, in addition to talks between Admiral Yuan Yubai of the Chinese Navy and Seychelles' Minister for Home Affairs and Transport and the country's chief of defence forces. The two sides have expressed their desire for more frequent visits by the Chinese Navy. In recent years, as anti-piracy cooperation strengthened in the Indian Ocean, more countries and more navy ships have come to Seychelles' Port Victoria. The Chinese delegation also visited the Seychelles Coastguard base and the Regional Anti-Piracy Prosecutions and Intelligence Co-ordination Centre (RAPPIC).⁷

⁴ "Seychelles signs pact to regulate arms trade", *Seychelles Nation*, June 8, 2013 at <http://www.nation.sc/index.php?art=31761>

⁵ "Indian naval ship visits", *Seychelles Nation*, June 15, 2013 at <http://www.nation.sc/index.php?art=31849>

⁶ "EU Naval Force Strengthens Cooperation With Mozambique", *EUNAVFOR Somalia*, June 23, 2013 at <http://eunavfor.eu/eu-naval-force-strengthens-cooperation-with-mozambique/>

⁷ "Chinese navy commander in talks with minister, defence chief", *Seychelles Nation*, June 25, 2013 at <http://www.nation.sc/index.php?art=31970>

Australia formally joins Seychelles based RAPPIC

Australia has joined the Seychelles-based Regional Anti-Piracy Prosecutions and Intelligence Coordination Centre (Rappicc). This gives a boost to the fight against piracy in the region. The agreement was formally signed on board the Australian warship HMAS Newcastle which is on a visit to Port Victoria as part of an ongoing six-month mission named 'Operation Slipper', aimed at countering piracy, terrorism and narcotics trade in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Oman. It is the fourth Australian warship to visit Seychelles since last year. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Seychelles and Australia has also been signed on the conditions of transfer of suspected pirates, armed robbers as well as illicit property.⁸

Drydocks World & Maritime World to host key shipping summit in Dubai

The UAE-based maritime services provider Drydocks World & Maritime World will host the Mare Forum Shipping Summit in Dubai in 2014. The Mare Forum is one of the most global and influential forums for the maritime and marine industry and this will be its first foray into the MENA region. Next year's summit will focus on the global economic shift from the West to the East, and traditional navigational relations with Africa, in addition to international business and trade, and the impacts of energy and resource needs on the shipping industry. Dubai is seen as lying at the crossroads of international maritime and shipping routes, while also being in close proximity to the MENA region, Africa, and

the subcontinent. The conference is also expected to explore the potential of the maritime and marine sectors in Dubai, including those for the Dubai Maritime City.⁹

Iran seizes UAE fishing boats in Gulf waters

Iranian press reports indicated that two UAE fishing boats were detained by Iran after they crossed into what the country claims to be its territorial waters in the Persian Gulf. One Indian national and twelve UAE nationals who were on board the boats were detained and transferred to a military dock. Relations between the UAE and Iran are strained over claims by both countries to the three islands of Abu Musa and Greater and Lesser Tunb.¹⁰

Yemen, Djibouti to cooperate on maritime issues

Yemeni and Djiboutian officials have agreed to cooperate on addressing maritime issues that affect both countries. The two sides signed a series of accords to address common issues including illegal weapons, human trafficking, and contraband, with a proposal to set up a joint committee to address smuggling and trafficking. Agreements on customs, security, and strengthening of relations between the two sides were also renewed. Yemen and Djibouti share a maritime border.¹¹

Yemen calls for removal of Bab al-Mandab strait, Red Sea from IMO list of piracy-prone high seas

The chairman of Yemen's General Authority for Maritime Affairs has called for the removal of the

⁸ "Australia gives a boost to fight against piracy", *Seychelles Nation*, June 27, 2013 at <http://www.nation.sc/index.php?art=32002>

⁹ "Drydocks to host top shipping forum in Dubai", *TradeArabia*, June 18, 2013 at http://www.tradearabia.com/news/IND_238032.html

¹⁰ "Iran Seizes Two UAE Fishing Boats in Gulf, Arrests 13", *The Maritime Executive*, June 20, 2013 at <http://www.maritime-executive.com/article/Iran-Seizes-Two-UAE-Fishing-Boats-in-Gulf-Arrests-13-2013-06-20/>

¹¹ "Yemen, Djibouti Strengthen Ties Against Maritime Crime", *Regional Investment Agency (RIA) COMESA*, June 18, 2013 at http://www.comesaria.org/site/en/news_details.php?chaine=yemen-djibouti-strengthen-ties-against-maritime-crime&id_news=17080&id_article=119

Red Sea and Bab al-Mandab strait from the list of high seas piracy list, during a meeting at the International Maritime Organisation headquarters in London. Yemen has said that pirates have been unsuccessful in their recent efforts to seize ships in these areas owing to international efforts to curb piracy. The meeting was attended by member states of the Djibouti Code of Conduct of 2009 that aims to deal with piracy and armed robbery against ships in the western Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden.¹²

Kenya wants Indian cooperation

Kenya, which is suffering due to piracy emanating in Somalia with which it shares a 680-km long, porous border in East Africa, is keen on greater regional cooperation with India, according to a senior strategic affairs expert. Kenya is keen on strengthening the Indian Ocean Rim - Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) as the region faces many common challenges and security has emerged as the most recent common challenge due to rise in piracy. India is to take over as the chair of the IOR-ARC later this year. The threat of pirates in the waters stretching in a wide swathe from the Somali coastline

is preventing cruise-liners from calling at Kenyan ports. The tourism industry in Kenya has taken a major hit, with cruise ships diverting from the unsafe waters. The fisheries industry has also been impacted as it has become risky for fishermen to go out to sea.¹³

Third Counter-Piracy task force in Gulf of Aden deployed by Singapore

While piracy remains a serious problem in the Strait of Malacca, Singapore has been successful in deterring all hijacking incidents in its neighbourhood. Singapore in cooperation with countries including Australia, France, Indonesia, South Korea, Thailand, and the UK has contributed to the CTF 151 counter-piracy operations with three command teams, four task groups and a frigate with a naval helicopter. Singapore's Minister of State for Defence, Chan Chun Sing, reported that it was in Singapore's interest to conduct collective efforts in countering piracy and securing the sea lines of communications. Officials have also assured that Singapore will continue to play its role in ensuring the security and freedom of navigation of the ships.¹⁴

¹² "Yemen seeks removal of Red Sea, Bab al-Mandab from piracy risk list", *Yemen News Agency (SABA)*, June 18, 2013 at <http://www.sabanews.net/en/news314455.htm>

¹³ "Kenya wants Indian cooperation", *India Africa Connect*, June 13, 2013 at <http://ianssoftware.com/indiaafricaconnect/index.php?param=news/2488/news/119>

¹⁴ "Singapore at Heart of Counter Piracy", *World Maritime News*, June 13, 2013 at <http://worldmaritimenews.com/archives/86537/singapore-at-heart-of-counter-piracy/>

ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Sri Lankan permit to Chinese fishing company alarms Indian fish workers

A recent move by the Government of Sri Lanka, giving permission to a Chinese fishing company to use its Dikkowita Harbour to fish in the island's international waters, has alarmed fish workers in Kerala and Lakshadweep. They fear that the Chinese fishing vessels, equipped with modern satellite based instruments to track fish, will soon deplete fish in the region, affecting their catches. Chinese vessels had been fishing illegally off the Lankan coast for years, but the Rajapaksa Government has now given legal cover to this. The move is seen as a threat to India's rich tuna fields and could affect Lakshadweep's economy which relies heavily on tuna. China is the largest tuna consumer in the world and is a leading market for the high-end fish. The Chinese company is scheduled to start its operations with four highly equipped 150 ft. vessels. Sixteen additional vessels will soon join the fleet.¹⁵

MoU on ports cooperation between South Africa and Mozambique

A landmark memorandum of understanding (MoU) paving the way for increased cooperation between South Africa and Mozambique's port authorities, the Transnet National Ports Authority and Maputo Ports Development Company, have been signed. The agreement is a result of extensive talks and visits. The MoU opened the way for collaboration for both countries in infrastructure development, engineering, training and marine services. It will help increase intra-regional trade within the Southern African

Development Community (SADC) region. It will also help increase the efficiency of the ports. The MoU is also seen as an important step toward fostering greater cooperation in the SADC and the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (Comesa).¹⁶

Tri-partite fisheries proposal in Seychelles

Nepad (The New Partnership for Africa's Development), Japan and Seychelles plan to jointly implement a proposed tripartite fisheries project. The project aims at reinforcing capacities of fishermen by developing bankable and feasible business plans in the long term. This is expected to become an example of Japan's cooperation and Africa's ownership of its economy. The project would give Seychellois fishermen an opportunity to develop their business proposals, at artisanal level, semi-industrial level and later also at the industrial level. Seychelles is an example for other countries in Africa in terms of fisheries development. Nepad also plans to launch a fisheries investment fund in Seychelles, and use it as a model for other countries.¹⁷

Abu Dhabi to help devise strategic urban development plan for Seychelles

The project director of the Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council (UPC), Theyab Al Nahyan, visited Seychelles with a delegation for the first workshop aimed at developing an urban strategic development plan for Seychelles and a master plan for the country's capital city of Victoria. The plan is due to be outlined by the year 2014 to address the problems of a growing population and diversified economy. The plan will

¹⁵ "Indian fishworkers concerned over Chinese fishing off SL", *Ceylon Today*, June 26, 2013 at <http://www.ceylontoday.lk/16-35971-news-detail-indian-fishworkers-concerned-over-chinese-fishing-off-l.html>

¹⁶ "SA, Moz to increase ports cooperation", *South Africa.info*, June 4, 2013 at <http://www.southafrica.info/news/international/mozambique-040513.htm#.UdMJg9hc3LQ>

¹⁷ "Tri-partite fisheries project proposed", *Seychelles Nation*, June 7, 2013 at <http://www.nation.sc/index.php?art=31742>

articulate a clear vision for Seychelles. The success of the plan will rely on capturing local knowledge and identifying opportunities for growth. Nahyan has said that both the governments share a similar vision for sustainable development and a balanced environment. The Seychelles and Abu Dhabi governments have established a very strong relationship through valued initiatives through the years.¹⁸

Seychelles fights against illegal fishing

A communiqué from Seychelles' Ministry of Natural Resources and Industry has said that the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing, was submitted to the legal department of the FAO. Seychelles is the first country on the African continent to give its backing to a UN treaty aimed at ensuring that illegally harvested fish do not enter the commercial trade. The agreement's implementation requires ratification or accession by 25 FAO members. Only 23 countries are signatory to it so far, while only five, including the European Union, have ratified or acceded to it. The Agreement requires the parties to take practical steps to deny port entry and access to port services to foreign fishing and transport vessels that have harvested fish illegally. The Seychelles Fishing Authority (SFA) will be the implementing agency of the agreement.¹⁹

Shanghai Institute of Tourism to train lecturers, students at Seychelles Tourism Academy

A decision has been made for lecturers and students at the Seychelles Tourism Academy (STA) to benefit

from a fully sponsored course at the Shanghai Institute of Tourism. The lecturers will be trained at the Institute beginning October 2013. The STA has also highlighted that more opportunities will also be made available to students of the University of Seychelles hospitality management program for their two-month work attachment in hotels in Shanghai. This comes as a follow up to a memorandum of understanding signed with the Shanghai Institute of Tourism on January 25, 2013. The STA will now be able to open new avenues and opportunities for further training and upgradation of skills for its graduates and lecturers.²⁰

China set to become major tourism market for Seychelles

China is set to become an increasingly important secondary tourism market for Seychelles. Air Seychelles has recently introduced three weekly flights to Hong Kong. Three thousand and thirty-three Chinese visitors had arrived in Seychelles by the second week of June 2013, an increase of 67 percent over the same period in 2012. Seychelles is becoming increasingly well-known on the Chinese market, especially in Hong Kong and Beijing. The Seychelles Tourism Board was recently involved in the ITE tourism fair in Hong Kong and the Beijing international expo. The number of Chinese vacationers travelling abroad is expected to increase to 100 million this year from 83 million in 2012. China is overtaking the USA and Germany as a market source for world tourism.²¹

¹⁸ "Abu Dhabi helps with designing strategic plan for Seychelles", *Seychelles Nation*, June 11, 2013 at <http://www.nation.sc/index.php?art=31795>

¹⁹ "Seychelles supports global fight against illegal fishing", *Seychelles Nation*, June 25, 2013 at <http://www.nation.sc/index.php?art=31965>

²⁰ "STA lecturers and students to be trained in Shanghai and Thailand", *Seychelles Nation*, June 28, 2013 at <http://www.nation.sc/index.php?art=32034>

²¹ "China set to be major secondary market for Seychelles", *Seychelles Nation*, June 28, 2013 at <http://www.nation.sc/index.php?art=32032>

Bilateral pacts signed between Sri Lanka and Tanzania

In an act strengthening bilateral cooperation between Tanzania and Sri Lanka in the areas of commerce, culture and tourism, three agreements were signed in Dar es Salaam between the two countries. President Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania said that his country is set to benefit from Sri Lanka which has already offered scholarships for Tanzanian students. Tanzania was eagerly waiting for more trade investments particularly in the areas of agriculture and tourism. In a meeting held earlier, President Mahinda Rajapaksa of Sri Lanka briefed him on the progress of the Commonwealth meeting scheduled for Colombo later in 2013. The Tanzanian president affirmed that his government was planning to open an embassy in Colombo.²²

Malaysian Prime Minister leads a huge delegation to Dar es Salaam

A delegation of 28 companies led by the Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, visited Tanzania. The delegation, with over 100 members, worked to promote Malaysia-Tanzania ties, investment and trade at the ongoing Global Smart Partnership Dialogue. The theme of the dialogue between the two sides was “Leveraging Technology for Africa’s Socio-Economic Transformation”. The African countries have high regard for Malaysia in the field of development as the country has achieved a per capita income about US\$10,000, far ahead of the African countries who became independent almost the same time as Malaysia did. The Global

Smart Partnership Dialogue was launched in 1995 when Malaysia hosted the first Langkawi International Dialogue (LID). The dialogue serves as a platform for smart partners including heads of government, business leaders, scientists and academicians to meet and discuss ideas and experiences related to Science, Technology and Innovation.²³

International sanctions further impact Iranian maritime industry

Iran’s maritime trade has been greatly restricted by the intensification of international sanctions and internal mismanagement in the Ports and Maritime Organisation, according to the Tabnak News and Information Centre. At Shahid Rajaei, Iran’s most important trade port, the last foreign shipping line has stopped operating. Top foreign shipping lines have cut ties with Iran, with the last four lines having stopped berthing at the port on June 15; these include Chinese, Taiwanese, Singaporean, and South Korean shipping lines. International sanctions have targeted Iran’s oil and gas, trade, financial, and industrial sectors. The country’s oil revenues have also declined drastically owing to lack of international insurers for its oil tankers, and a fall in number of customers.²⁴ This leaves Tehran much more reliant on overland trade routes, which will push up goods prices that have already been affected by currency volatility. The American National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) makes explicit exemption for food, medicines, and humanitarian goods, but most foreign shipping lines have severed ties completely with Iran to avoid complications.²⁵

²² “Tanzania, Sri Lanka sign bilateral pacts”, *Daily News Online*, June 29, 2013 at <http://www.dailynews.co.tz/index.php/local-news/19228-tanzania-sri-lanka-sign-bilateral-pacts>

²³ “Malaysian Prime Minister brings 28 companies to Dar es Salaam”, *Daily News Online*, June 30, 2013 at <http://www.dailynews.co.tz/index.php/local-news/19248-malaysian-prime-minister-brings-28-companies-to-dar>

²⁴ “Sanctions take their toll on Iran’s maritime industry”, *Hellenic Shipping News*, June 25, 2013 at <http://www.hellenicshippingnews.com/News.aspx?ElementId=e5a13e80-a4ff-488f-ae82-1b55c77f1287>

²⁵ “Chinese firms drop Iran as latest U.S. sanctions bite”, *Reuters*, July 1, 2013 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/07/01/iran-shipping-idUSL5N0F43CH20130701>

Kenya Ranked Top in World Bank's Growth Assessment

The World Bank has rated Kenya as Africa's best country in terms of policies and institutional reforms that support growth and reduce poverty. The National Treasury started the process of borrowing some Sh85 billion from the international markets through a sovereign bond. The latest World Bank ranking also comes as a slap in the face to an annual "failed-state-index" published two days ago by a controversial Washington groups Fund for Peace and Foreign Policy magazine which ranked Kenya among the world's 20 most unstable countries²⁶. "Moreover, the government has maintained fiscal discipline even in the face of recent economic shocks and budgetary pressures including spending on election and security operations in Somalia. As a result, public debt as a share of Gross Domestic Product has declined below 45 percent," the World Bank noted.

Kenya seeks extension of US export deal

Kenya has started lobbying for a trade deal between Africa and the United States, be extended by not less than ten years once it expires on September 30, 2013.²⁷ The African Growth and Opportunity Act, popularly known as Agoa according to Kenyan government should actually be transformed into a permanent trade agreement. The act provides trade preferences for quota and duty-free entry into the United States for certain goods. Such benefits include expanded market access for textile and apparel goods into the United States for eligible countries. It is estimated that Kenya exported goods worth some

Sh4.67 billion to the US in 2010 and Sh5.83 billion in 2011. The rule allows apparel manufacturers in Agoa from less developed countries the leeway to utilise yarns and fabrics from any region. The federation further wants the same terms of access to be applied to all Agoa beneficiaries. The lobby group is also trying to push a free trade agreement between the US and Africa.

Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra's Regional Tour intended to develop economic and commercial ties

Shortly after Indian PM Manmohan Singh visited Thailand, the Thai counterpart undertook a three day visit to Sri Lanka and Maldives to strengthen economic ties with the two. Sri Lanka is currently the third largest South Asian trading partner with Thailand after India and Bangladesh. Her visit to Maldives was historic as it was the first ever visit made by a Thai head. Yingluck has also managed to negotiate and open multinational markets for Thai companies. Addressing the Sri Lankan parliament with representatives of 30 large companies, she told the MPs that Thailand was looking forward for long term bilateral trade and investment. Agreements on tourism cooperation, science and technology were signed by the officials of the two countries. Yingluck also held talks with Maldivian PM Mohammed Waheed on the possibilities of enhancing the bilateral trade with free trade agreements in the future. Maldives, which is stuck in its internal political turmoil, seems to gain more with this visit²⁸.

²⁶ "Kenya ranked top in World Bank's growth assessment", *The Star*, June 27, 2013 at <http://www.the-star.co.ke/news/article-125959/kenya-ranked-top-world-banks-growth-assessment>

²⁷ "Kenya seeks extension of US export deal", *The Star*, June 25, 2013 at <http://www.the-star.co.ke/news/article-125616/kenya-seeks-extension-us-export-trade-deal>

²⁸ "Thailand bids for stronger regional role", *Khabar South Asia*, June 20, 2013 at http://khabarsouthasia.com/en_GB/articles/apwi/articles/features/2013/06/20/feature-03

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS/ DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

Nagoya Protocol ratified by Comoros

Comoros is the most recent country to ratify the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity. This brings the total number of ratifications of the Nagoya Protocol to 18. The Protocol will enter into force on the 90th day after the date of deposit of the 50th instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.²⁹

Oman will help Zanzibar to better manage disasters

The Government of Oman has promised to provide skills and equipment to Zanzibar in its efforts to improve disaster management and risk reduction. Oman's Ambassador to Tanzania, Sheikh Yahya Moosa Albakry, meeting the Zanzibar President, Ali Mohamed Shein, said that his country's experience and skills in disaster management could be shared with Zanzibar through capacity building and equipment. The island has been hit by disasters, mainly marine accidents, in recent years. According to environmentalists, the islands are vulnerable to disasters. Both the dignitaries agreed that strengthening disaster response and management capacity should be an important national objective for Zanzibar.³⁰

South African government provides 'green' internships for its youth

Aimed at building a pool of young, capable professionals for the country's biodiversity and natural resource management sector, South Africa has launched a training, mentoring and workplace-based learning project. The Groen Sebenza project, aims at developing skills while bridging the gap between education and job opportunities in South Africa's green economy. The innovative project, spearheaded by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (Sanbi), will see 800 unemployed students being placed in skilled biodiversity jobs in both the public and private sector. It is expected that the practical experience and training will stimulate their careers on. The project is financed by the South African Government's Jobs Fund.³¹

Marine Erosion Threatening Zanzibar University

The State University of Zanzibar (SUZA) buildings at Beit-elras campus are in danger because of the rising sea levels. The fact was confirmed to the parliament by the Minister for Education and Vocational Training, Ali Juma Shamuhunat. He revealed that there is a plan to plant grass and trees along the coastal areas of Beit-elras to protect it from

²⁹ "Comoros ratifies Nagoya Protocol", *Africa Science News*, June 6, 2013 at http://www.africasciencenews.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=833:comoros-ratifies-nagoya-protocol&catid=52:environment&Itemid=115

³⁰ "Zanzibar supported to handle disaster management", *AllAfrica*, June 8, 2013 at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201306100182.html>

³¹ "'Green' internships for SA youth", *SouthAfrica.info*, June 12, 2013 at <http://www.southafrica.info/business/economy/development/groen-sebenza-120613.htm#.Ud5Q1qzcOVY>

erosion. The minister further told the parliament that most of Zanzibar particularly areas on the shoreline are affected by sea rise. The government is encouraging people to plant trees, a method that is cheaper in comparison to some of the other mitigation and adaptation measures to manage climate change.³²

Indonesian haze affects ship navigation through Straits of Malacca and Singapore

Haze originating from forest fires in Sumatra, Indonesia have blanketed over the Malacca and Singapore Straits, a strategic gateway in world trade and one of the world's busiest waterways. While smoke haze has been a problem for the region at this time of every year, visibility hit new lows this year. With the Straits of Malacca and Singapore being among the narrowest shipping lanes in the world, reduced visibility has made transit through them particularly dangerous. Singaporean officials have expressed concern that a maritime accident, especially involving oil spillage, could adversely impact the region's maritime environment. The Indonesian government has stopped the "slash and burn" method of land clearing in Sumatra that has contributed to the haze.³³ Malaysia has also been badly affected by the haze.³⁴

Strategy of green growth in Thailand needed

Thai Prime Minister Yingluck has offered tax rebates amounting to 100,000 baht to the first time car buyers.

On one hand an offer like this not only increased the car sales but also gave rise to worst traffic jams and also increased carbon emissions. In another case, the government has offered subsidies on diesel and fossil fuels that have led to the other energy sectors like solar turn uncompetitive and has also added to the environmental hazards. Thailand was ranked second in the global CHG emission rate in between 1992-2006 and still the PM has not been able to address the issue by chairing the National Environmental Board. The level of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons that are cancer causing has risen up twice the safe limit and there has also been detrimental rise in the lead content in rice. Climate change and environmental problems continue to worsen as the people too refuse to look at it as a top priority and hence, green growth is yet to find its roots in Thailand.

Kenya overhauls wildlife laws following rise in elephant and rhino deaths

Kenya's Cabinet has approved the Wildlife Bill and Policy which aims to overhaul the country's national wildlife legislation. The move is believed to be one of the swiftest responses to recent reports of escalating poaching of elephants and rhinos. The Kenyan Parliament is expected to ratify the decision that will open a new era of wildlife conservation in Kenya where tourism, which is largely wildlife-based, generates 12 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product and employs over 300,000 people.³⁵

³² "Marine erosion threatening Zanzibar University", *Daily News Online*, June 29, 2013 at <http://www.dailynews.co.tz/index.php/parliament-news/19238-marine-erosion-threatening-zanzibar-university>

³³ "Singapore Gravely Concerned About Indonesian Haze Impairing Ship Navigation", *The Maritime Executive*, June 21, 2013 at <http://www.maritime-executive.com/article/Singapore-Gravely-Concerned-About-Indonesian-Haze-Impairing-Ship-Navigation-2013-06-21/>

³⁴ "Haze from Sumatra's forest fires chokes three nations", *The Hindu*, June 20, 2013 at <http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/haze-from-sumatras-forest-fires-chokes-three-nations/article4832902.ece>

³⁵ "Kenya overhauls wildlife laws following rise in elephant and rhino deaths", *The Guardian*, June 7, 2013 at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/africa-wild/2013/jun/07/kenya-wildlife-laws-elephant-rhino-deaths>

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This newsletter, compiled by the IDSA covers the recent developments in the fields of maritime security, economic cooperation and environmental concerns/ disaster risk management in the various countries of the Indian Ocean region.



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