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Indian Ocean Watch

A Monthly Newsletter on the Indian Ocean Region



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Contents	Page No
EDITOR'S NOTE	2
MARITIME SECURITY	3
ECONOMIC COOPERATION	7
ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS/ DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT	12

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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 month of June, the Iran-Tanzania naval cooperation and Iran's claim of possessing 5000 Km-range missile in its arsenal were significant developments, among several others, on the Indian Ocean maritime security front. A new idea of a Bay-of-Bengal Community was broached in a Bangladesh conference. An oil tanker was hijacked off coast of Malaysia. Reports also suggest that the number of maritime pirate attacks in Southeast Asia has overtaken Somalia.

On the economic front, the Global Cloud Xchange is planning new undersea cable to fill the communication gap between India and Singapore. India's Vice President Mr Hamid Ansari, during his visit to China, called for details about the Maritime Silk Road initiative by China. The Economist Intelligence Unit has ranked Malaysia as the 19th investor-friendly country. Discovery of a new major gas deposit offshore Tanzania was also reported.

On the environmental and disaster front, the World Heritage Committee deferred a decision to put Great Barrier Reef on danger list for the next 12 months. Seychelles launched the Integrated Ocean Information Services for Indian Ocean project. And, in another significant development, it was reported that in deforestation, Indonesia has overtaken Brazil, the global leader.

Hope the readers will find the issue useful.

Ruchita Beri

Editor

MARITIME SECURITY

Bangladeshi sailors badly treated by Somali pirates

Somali sea pirates released seven Bangladeshi sailors after three and half years of captivity who arrived home recently on June 12, 2014. The sailors told that they were given very bad and slavish treatment by the pirates. They were usually beaten anytime without any provocation. The pirates had taken the released sailors captive in 2010. The return of the sailors has been possible due to the efforts of the foreign ministry of Bangladesh and the Maritime Piracy and Humanitarian Response Programme (MPHRP). Although, it sounds unusual, the agencies claim that no ransom has been paid to the pirates. The pirates had demanded US\$20 million as ransom from the Iranian ship owner in lieu of his ship and the 23 sailors including the seven Bangladeshis.¹

Idea of a Bay-of-Bengal community

C Raja Mohan, head of strategic studies and distinguished fellow at Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi, has put forward the idea of building a Bay-of-Bengal community. He broached the idea in a lecture in Dhaka. The community could be in the form of Bangladesh, India and Myanmar trilateral. The three littoral countries, according to him, can create a framework for cooperation. The idea has been forwarded at a time when China is pressing for a Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar (BCIM) economic corridor. He thought although China or the US also can help in the process of the formation of the community, strong Bangladesh and India would

be important in any regional cooperation. Bangladesh, India and Myanmar, in the contemporary globalised economy, are going to make the Bay into a more active and important domain. The race for energy and natural resources will make it more important.²

India needs to take diplomatic action for the release of its fishermen

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Ms J Jayalalitha has sought for strong diplomatic action by the Government of India for the release of 28 Indian fishermen from the Sri Lankan navy. In her letter to Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi, Ms Jayalalitha expressed that the repeated instances of apprehension and abduction of fishermen by the Sri Lankan navy are adding to a sense of unrest and resentment among the Tamil Nadu fishermen. She also stated that the Indian Government should not consider the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) with Sri Lanka as a settled question, as it is a matter under litigation in the Supreme Court of India.³

Human trafficking in Indo-Sri Lanka sea route

The Government of India has received reports about the intrusion of traffickers in India through the Indo-Sri Lankan maritime border. Among them, some terrorist activists are also present, as observed by the intelligence services. The Indian government has appointed a special committee including some members of the Indian Coast Guard to look into this matter. In addition, a special bureau of Indian police service has taken measures to form a committee which

¹ “Somali pirates treated sailors as slaves”, *bdnews24.com*, June 14, 2014, at <http://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2014/06/14/somali-pirates-treated-sailors-as-slaves>

² “Indian thinker moots Bay family”, *bdnews24.com*, June 12, 2014, at <http://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2014/06/12/indian-thinker-moots-bay-family>

³ “Jayalalitha seeks diplomatic action for release of fishermen”, *The Times of India*, June 30, 2014, at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Jayalalitha-seeks-diplomatic-action-for-release-of-fishermen/articleshow/37508908.cms>

would comprise of intelligence units and officials from the Indian Ministry of Fisheries. A special police check point will also be set up in Rameshwaram, further tightening the security in the border area.⁴

Indonesian Military launched Operation Garda Wibawa 14 in Ambalat waters

In response to threats in the disputed Ambalat waters as well as to improve Indonesia-Malaysia maritime border security, the Indonesian Military (TNI) recently launched a joint operation with a combination of the Navy and the Air Force. Operation Garda Wibawa 14, that involves about 1,200 personnel from the Indonesian Navy and the Air Force, will be provided assistance by the Indonesian Army. General Moeldoko, TNI commander, hoped that the operation would be able to handle violations of the Indonesian maritime border with Malaysia better. The operation was launched at a time when there was an increase in the number of activities in the disputed Ambalat waters between Malaysia and Indonesia. The dispute in the region is due to its high potential of energy reserves.⁵

Iran-Tanzania naval cooperation arrangement

After the Iranian Navy's 30th Flotilla of warships left Dar As-Salaam port completing its stay for some time there, Mehdi Aqajafari, the Iranian Ambassador to Dar As-Salaam, announced that his country will train Tanzanian Navy officers. The relations between Iran and Tanzania are experiencing a positive trend and they have agreed that Iran's training and operational warships would make regular visits to Tanzania. Tanzania has also asked Iran to share its maritime experience and strengthen the country's navy. According to the

Washington Institute for the Near East Policy, after two decades of the Iran-Iraq war, the Iranian naval capabilities have increased and it possesses the capability of waging asymmetric warfare against larger naval forces. It has transformed into a highly motivated, well-equipped, and well-financed force. The Iranian Navy has also been on patrol against pirates in the Gulf of Aden since November 2008.⁶

Iran's 5,000 Km-range missile capable of hitting US base in Indian Ocean

A senior Iranian official claims that Iran has a ballistic missile with the range of 5000 kilometers; capable of hitting United States' strategic base at Diego Garcia. Diego Garcia is situated on a lone lagoon in the Indian Ocean. The base is home to major Air Force; Naval and Submarine; Space and Communications; and logistics facilities. It was earlier believed that Iran's missiles have a maximum range of around 2000 kilometers. The Iranian assertion comes as Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Benny Gantz on June 9, 2014, cautioned of Iran's ambition for nuclear weapons and its increasing regional military and strategic influence.⁷

Madagascar rosewood seized by Singaporean authorities

Authorities in Singapore have seized massive shipment of rosewood smuggled from Madagascar. The seizure is evidence that despite an official ban on the trade, large-scale smuggling of Madagascar's rainforest timber continues. According to a leaked correspondence between officials in Madagascar, the shipment amounts to around 3,000 tons. The rosewood logs seem to have

⁴ "A special security operation on human trafficking in the Indo-Sri Lanka sea route", *Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation*, June 30, 2014, at <http://www.slbc.lk/index.php/component/content/article/1-latest-news/20398—a-special-security-operation-on-human-trafficking-in-the-indo-sri-lanka-sea-route-.html>

⁵ "Border operation signals TNI's shift to maritime focus", *Jakarta Post*, June 2, 2014, at <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/06/02/border-operation-signals-tni-s-shift-maritime-focus.html>

⁶ "Iran to train Tanzanian Navy officers", *FARS News Agency*, June 15, 2014, at <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13930325000510>

⁷ "Iran: 5,000km-range missile can hit US Indian Ocean Base", *The Algemeiner*, June 9, 2014, at <http://www.algemeiner.com/2014/06/09/iran-5000km-range-missile-can-hit-us-indian-ocean-base/>

come from rainforests of Madagascar. The logs might have been piled after a surge in illegal logging that followed the 2009 coup dislodging former president Marc Ravalomanana from power. During the political crisis, national parks and forest reserves were plundered. However, following a global outcry, the interim government established an export ban on rainforest logs. Alexander von Bismarck, the Executive Director of Environmental Investigation Agency said that the surge in demand for luxury furniture in China has led to an increase in illegal smuggling of rosewood.⁸

Oil tanker hijacked off coast of Malaysia by pirates

Oil tanker 'MT Ai Maru' became a victim of pirate attack. They robbed around 700,000 litre of diesel worth US\$434,000 approximately. The oil tanker was moving from Singapore to Cambodia and the attack took place 31 nautical miles east of Tanjung Sedili off Johor, Malaysia, on June 15, 2014. The Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) said that the hijacking was carried out by a group of seven pirates who boarded the tanker from a speedboat. The pirates are believed to have been scared off by Malaysian Navy patrol vessels forcing them to flee to nearby islands. All the crew including the captain are safe, but are being investigated by MMEA to verify their potential involvement in the incident since such things have been common for some time recently. According to Nexus Maritime Security, this is the sixth hijacking in Southeast Asia since April 2014.⁹

More maritime security challenges for Mozambique

In a seminar on maritime security in the Indian Ocean, jointly organised by the Mozambique and the United

States (US) in Maputo, Mr Douglas Griffiths, the US Ambassador to Mozambique, said that the discovery of large natural gas reserves in Rovuma Basin has increased the possibility and threat of piracy in the waters of the northern Mozambique. He also pointed that the two countries "fortunately" still have some time to design a plan to protect the resources of Mozambique. The Mozambican Ministry of Defence has assured that the authorities are well aware of the maritime as well as other security threats arising from the recent discovery of offshore hydrocarbon resources. This is to note that Mozambique has a 2,500 km long coastline to be protected, which it cannot do alone. Only a network of national and regional partners in collaboration can face the threats effectively.¹⁰

More security provisions and facilities at Maputo Port

Mozambique Government has taken more steps to tighten the security of the Maputo Port. In order to comply with both the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code, the Maputo Port Development Company (MPDC) has instructed that the road shipping companies in the country must register their trucks with the port authority. Non-compliant vehicles shall be banned from entry into the port. These steps have been taken to ensure that the port maintains its accreditation to ISO 28000:2007 Specification for security management systems for the supply chain rules. The port already operates with an ID card system. It has further strengthened access controls, with new gates, lights and electric fencing. Together with an increase in the shoreside security patrols, water-side patrols have also been introduced to secure the busiest port in Mozambique.¹¹

⁸ "Singapore intercepts massive illegal shipment of Madagascar rosewood", *mongabay.com*, June 3, 2014, at <http://news.mongabay.com/2014/0603-singapore-madagascar-rosewood-bust.html>

⁹ "Pirates hijack tanker off Malaysia, steal 700,000 litres of diesel", *World Maritime News*, June 17, 2014, at <http://worldmaritimeneeds.com/archives/127086/pirates-hijack-tanker-off-malaysia-steal-700000-litres-of-diesel/>

¹⁰ "Seminar held on maritime security", *All Africa*, June 12, 2014, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201406130361.html>

¹¹ "Maputo tightens port security", *IHS Maritime 360*, June 29, 2014, at <http://www.ihs-maritime360.com/article/13385/maputo-tightens-port-security>

China donates new patrol boat to Seychelles for better EEZ protection

The Commander in Chief of the Seychelles People's Defence Forces (SPDF) and the President of Seychelles James Michel unveiled Etoile, the latest addition to the fleet of patrol boats of the Seychelles Coast Guard at its base on Ile Perseverance. This new Type 62 Class gunboat has been donated by the People's Republic of China to boost the operational capabilities of the Seychelles' naval force. The boat has a maximum speed of 26 Knots and a cruising speed of 16 Knots and is designed for multipurpose tasks like patrol and surveillance against piracy, illegal fishing, terrorism, etc. This is the third boat, besides Topaz and Andromache, which exceeds 40 meter length in the Seychelles Coast Guard fleet.¹²

Southeast Asia overtakes Somalia in piracy

After the international clampdown on the pirates off the coast of war-torn Somalia and decrease in the number of ship hijacking and abductions there, Southeast Asia has become the world's hotspot for such attacks. The Southeast Asian region, particularly the Malacca Straits, recorded a surge in piracy in 2013. According to the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the upwards pirate attack trend in the region started in 2010, which rose upto 150 attacks in 2013. Malacca Strait Piracy continues to be a major disruptor in the safety of maritime routes in the Indian Ocean Region. With the global shipping shift to Asia, the problem in the region is expected to become worse.¹³

¹² "New patrol boat to boost Seychelles' capability to better protect EEZ", *Seychelles Nation*, June 20, 2014, at <http://www.nation.sc/article.html?id=242046>

¹³ "Southeast Asia overtakes Somalia", *Maritime Security Review*, June 13, 2014, at <http://www.marsecreview.com/2014/06/southeast-asia-overtakes-somalia/>

ECONOMIC COOPERATION

New cable planned by GCX between India and Singapore

Global Cloud Xchange (GCX) is planning to build a submarine cable between Mumbai and Singapore. The new system will bear the name India Cloud Xchange or ICX, and will feature four fiber pairs each at 80x100Gbps. It will cover 5060 kilometers and may include branches to Chennai and/or Trivandrum. ICX will avoid the terrestrial route between Chennai and Mumbai and will bridge the gaps between the company's Falcon system connecting Mumbai with the Middle East; and the FNAL system connecting Singapore with East Asia.¹⁴

India seeks details on Maritime Silk Road proposal

India, before supporting the Maritime Silk Road (MSR), asks for more details about the initiative from Beijing. During his visit to China, Indian Vice President Mr Hamid Ansari said that there will be a detailed discussion on the MSR initiative and further details on the initiative are solicited by India to be able to study the proposal in its totality. He also expressed that his country will encourage the BCIM (Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar) project. While announcing the release of the India-China Encyclopaedia of Cultural Contact, Mr Ansari said that India and China have enhanced mutual cooperation in terms of cultural exchanges; and the growing cooperation between armed forces of both the countries has helped in building mutual trust. He concluded by saying that there is need for a comprehensive broad-based dialogue between the two

nations at all levels of the government, intelligentsia, business, media and the worlds of arts and culture.¹⁵

Iran welcomes foreign shipping lines

The Deputy Head of Iranian Ports and Maritime Organisation Mr Ali Jahandideh announced that the shipping lines of India, China, Taiwan and South Korea are sending a large number of trade vessels to Iranian ports. In collaboration with its foreign ministry, the Ports and Maritime Organization of Iran is looking to increase the presence of foreign shipping lines in the Shahid Rajayee Port. Mr Jahandideh also highlighted that the Ports and Maritime Organisation has been planning to attract foreign shipping lines and enhance their operation in the Iranian ports.¹⁶

US\$2.1 billion undersea electricity cable to be laid between Sumatra and Java

The Government of Indonesia, to transmit electricity from the island of Sumatra to the island of Java, has a plan to spend US\$2.1 billion on laying an undersea cable. The proposed cabling project is expected to end frequent black-out resulting from underinvestment in energy infrastructure. According to Mr Armida Alisjahbana, the Minister of National Development Planning, the project will have a transmission capacity of 500 Kilovolts and would cross a 35 kilometer-wide portion of the Sunda Strait. Although conceived for quite some time, the project was stalled by lack of funds. Now, a fund of US\$1.19 billion has been promised for the project by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), a body promoting development in

¹⁴ "GCX announces plans for new cable from Mumbai to Singapore", *Telecom Ramblings*, June 19, 2014, at <http://www.telecomramblings.com/2014/06/gcx-announces-plans-new-cable-mumbai-singapore/>

¹⁵ "India wants details on China Maritime Silk Road", *Outlook*, June 30, 2014, at <http://www.outlookindia.com/news/article/India-Wants-Details-on-China-Maritime-Silk-Road/847359>

¹⁶ "Iran welcomes increasing number of foreign vessels", *arabiansupplychain.com*, June 30, 2014, at <http://www.arabiansupplychain.com/article-10037-iran-welcomes-increasing-number-of-foreign-vessels/>

developing economies. The agency could also provide the rest of the funds, if the President of Indonesia approves as such.¹⁷

Indonesia hosts Australian business delegation seeking stronger trade ties

After a stint in Jakarta where agricultural trade was at the forefront of discussions, an Australian business delegation concluded its visit on June 20, 2014. The delegation included more than 180 people representing more than 130 companies from the State of Victoria in Australia. It was headed by Ms Louise Asher, Minister for Employment and Trade in State of Victoria. The aim of the mission was to boost trade, attract investment and improve Victorians' understanding of the government, business, culture and diversity of Southeast Asia by developing personal rapport. One of the important agendas of the delegation's visit was to strengthen partnership with Indonesia's food producer Indofood Sukses Makmur and work with Indonesian quarantine regulations with regards to potato seeds trading. The delegation's visit came after two weeks of Mr Suryo Sulisto, head of Indonesia's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Kadin), to Australia where he complained of poor business ties between the two countries despite their geographical proximity. This visit of the delegation from Victoria was quite optimistic about Australia's efforts in boosting genuine and stronger partnerships with Indonesia.¹⁸

Tourism and trade between Kenya and Seychelles to get boost, says Kenyan top diplomat

Ms Amina Mohamed, Foreign Secretary of Kenya, visited Seychelles. After her visit, Kenya plans for more

exchanges in tourism, fisheries, ICT, agriculture and commerce. She, during her visit, held high level talks with the Government of Seychelles and its business representatives. She reiterated the shared interests of Kenya and Seychelles in the Indian Ocean, a common vision for the blue economy, Africa brand of tourism and close cooperation in defense and maritime security. She also signed an agreement for a joint commission of cooperation between the two countries on June 9, 2014. Both the countries would look for the ways of marketing themselves together. After the visit, Ms Mohamed also told that her country would send an officer to the Regional Fusion and Law Enforcement Centre for Safety and Security at Sea (REFLECS3) Unit in Seychelles to work for the enhancement of maritime security.¹⁹

Economist Intelligence Unit ranks Malaysia as the 19th investor-friendly country

In the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)'s latest Business Environment Rankings (BER), Malaysia is among the top 20 investor-friendly countries for 2014-2018. Malaysia ranked 19th out of 82 countries. Although its regional rank remains stuck at the sixth place out of 17, the current global ranking of Malaysia is an improvement by five places from the period 2009-2013, leaving behind countries like the United Kingdom, France, South Korea, and Japan. The ranking model measures the attractiveness and quality of the business environment in the countries considered by the Economist Intelligence Unit's Country Forecast reports. The current report reflects that the market opportunities in Malaysia would improve due to the government efforts to raise private sector investment. However, no change in Malaysia's regional position indicates that it

¹⁷ "Indonesia plans \$2.1b Sumatra-Java undersea electricity cable", *Jakarta Globe*, June 20, 2014, at <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/business/indonesia-plans-2-1b-sumatra-java-undersea-electricity-cable/>

¹⁸ "Australia seeks stronger trade ties with Indonesia", *Jakarta Globe*, June 21, 2014, at <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/business/australia-seeks-stronger-trade-ties-indonesia/>

¹⁹ "Kenya's top diplomat Amina Mohamed visits Seychelles - Tourism and trade to get boost", *Seychelles News Agency*, June 10, 2014, at <http://www.seychellesnewsagency.com/articles/700/Kenyas+top+diplomat+Amina+Mohamed+visits+Seychelles+-+Tourism+and+trade+to+get+boost>

faces strong competition in its own backyard. Singapore retains the first spot in the list.²⁰

Malaysia to promote aqua-culture

For the sustenance of its people's fish-based food demand by 2020, Malaysia has started the process of the expansion of its aqua-culture sector in the fishing industry upto 50 per cent. This policy would ensure the equal distribution of the products between the fisheries and aqua-culture sectors. The ratio between the fisheries and the aqua-culture previously had been 80 per cent to 20 per cent. The change in policy corresponds with the increasing global fishery products demand that could dramatically threaten fish supplies. The government is also considering promoting coral-reef breeding as it is a part of the aqua-culture industry. The Malaysian Government aims to produce two million metric tonnes of fish products by the year 2020.²¹

Seychelles, Kenya will promote tourism despite 'travel advisories'

Travel advisories by several countries have been shrugged off by Kenya and Seychelles jointly. Ms Amina Mohamed, Foreign Secretary of Kenya and Mr Allan St Ange, Seychelles' Minister for Tourism, termed the advisories uncalled for. From their view, these travel advisories are like giving in to terrorists and further aid in their intentions. The best approach to be taken towards solving the problem of terrorism is sharing of intelligence rather than these advisories. They said that their countries will continue promoting tourism despite these travel advisories issued by the West. The Seychellois minister advised that the African countries should formulate opinion about themselves on their own.²²

Seychellois students leave for maritime training in Colombo

As a gesture of cooperation between Seychelles and Sri Lanka, 18 students from the Seychelles Maritime Training Centre (MTC) would undergo training in Colombo. The cooperation is a result of Seychelles' president James Michel's visit to Sri Lanka in 2012. The students would be trained in the Ceylon International Nautical & Engineering College (Cinec). There they would follow a pre sea training course for engine rating for three months. The course and training would feature theory and practice of seamanship; maritime safety; prevention of environmental and marine pollution, etc. The students would be exposed to the wide range of work and environment on tankers.²³

South Africa plans for the sustainable use of its ocean resources

For the realisation of the full potential of its marine resources, the Government of South Africa is developing a blue economy strategy. The country has large ocean space and it has started valuing it as a vital national asset. The sustainable use of marine resource in South Africa has enormous possibilities of employment and meaningful contribution to the economy of the country. Much of the South African ocean resources remain unexplored and its government is feeling an urgent need to collect information about them with an intention for their sustainable use. The White Paper on the National Environmental Management of the Ocean (Nemo) was approved by the South African Cabinet in December 2013. It aims to govern the national marine environment for its optimal and sustainable use. The Government wants

²⁰ "EIU: Malaysia the 19th best country to do business in", *The Star Online*, June 17, 2014, at <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2014/06/17/EUI-Malaysia-economy/>

²¹ "Bid to boost aqua-culture sector", *The Star Online*, June 20, 2014, at <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2014/06/20/Bid-to-boost-aquaculture-sector-Minister-Target-is-to-fulfil-demand-by-2020/>

²² "Seychelles, Kenya shrug off travel advisories", *The Star*, June 12, 2014, at <http://www.the-star.co.ke/news/article-170806/sychelles-kenya-shrug-travel-advisories>

²³ "First group of maritime students leave for Colombo training", *Seychelles Nation*, June 28, 2014, at <http://www.nation.sc/article.html?id=242162>

to use the plan as a key to poverty elimination and egalitarian development in South Africa by 2030.²⁴

New major gas deposit discovered offshore Tanzania

Statoil and ExxonMobil have jointly made a new high impact gas discovery in the Piri prospect in Block 2 offshore Tanzania. It adds two to three trillion cubic feet (tcf) more natural gas in the Piri-1. It brings the total volumes of the discovered gas upto 20 tcf in Block 2. The companies are experiencing a 100 per cent success rate in Tanzania since 2012. The new discovery is their sixth joint discovery in Block 2. More prospects have already been mapped and they will be explored during the period 2014- 2015.²⁵

4th biennial meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association Committee of Senior Officials held in Thailand

Around 80 participants from 20 member states attended the 4th biennial meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Committee of Senior Officials. The meeting was hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand at the Westin Siray Bay Resort & Spa, Phuket, from June 19-20, 2014. At the opening ceremony, Mr Chutintorn Gongsakdi, Director-General, Department of International Economic Affairs, Thailand, asked IORA member states to view the current political situation in his country as an opportunity to help strengthen and consolidate Thailand's democracy. The Secretary-General of IORA Ambassador K.V. Bhagirath had a meeting with Mr Manasvi Srisodapol, Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, to discuss the progress of IORA and offer clarification on

Thailand's current political situation. In the meet, IORA members discussed ways to promote cooperation in six priority areas, including maritime safety and security, response to maritime piracy, trade and investment facilitation, fisheries management, disaster risk reduction, and gender empowerment. It was also recommended that the role of Dialogue Partners (China, Egypt, France, Japan, Great Britain and United States of America) be boosted through more engagement in IORA's activities and meetings as well as regular dialogues with Member States. The academic-to-academic and business-to-business cooperation among the IORA members should also be promoted. The Outcome of the meeting will be submitted to the 14th IORA Council of Ministers Meeting to be held from October 6-9, 2014 in Perth, Australia.²⁶

Western Indian Ocean becomes a hot-bed for hydrocarbon exploration

The western Indian Ocean is gradually becoming a hot-bed for hydrocarbon exploration. According to estimates by the US Geological Survey, the western Indian Ocean has hydrocarbon reserves of 27.6 billion barrels (Bnbbbl) of oil, 441.1 trillion cubic feet (tcf) of natural gas and 13.77 billion barrels (Bnbbbl) of natural gas liquids. United Kingdom based Ophir Energy and Australian energy firm WHL Energy are carrying out a 3D seismic survey of 15000 Km² area for oil and gas exploration in Seychelles' exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Russian firm Akademik Fersman, on behalf of state hydrocarbons regulator Petro Seychelles and Japanese exploration company JOGMEC had carried out a seismic survey of different zone in the month of April 2014. The UK based Afren which surveyed Seychelles EEZ in 2013 said that on the basis of exploration results it may start drilling in the region in

²⁴ "SA develops sustainable blue economy strategy", *SouthAfrica.info*, June 10, 2014, at http://www.southafrica.info/business/economy/oceans-100614.htm#.U_9TNaPivLQ

²⁵ "Statoil makes another high-impact gas discovery offshore Tanzania", *Statoil*, June 18, 2014, at http://www.statoil.com/en/NewsAndMedia/News/2014/Pages/18Jun_Tanzania.aspx

²⁶ "Press releases : Thailand hosted the 4th Bi-annual Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association Committee of Senior Officials", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand*, Jun 23, 2014, at <http://www.mfa.go.th/main/en/media-center/14/47004-Thailand-hosted-the-4th-Bi-annual-Meeting-of—the.html>

2015. However, Seychelles has asked these energy companies to abide by stringent environmental standards as tourism is a major part of its economy. Meanwhile, US firm ExxonMobil will start exploratory drilling 70 nm offshore Mahajanga, northwest Madagascar. ExxonMobil also hopes to find oil-bearing sectors off coast of Mozambique, where Italian firm Eni discovered 15 tcf of gas in 2011. ExxonMobil is also active in Tanzanian sector where it is working with

Norwegian oil company Statoil and the Tanzania Petroleum Development Corporation, already making six offshore gas discoveries, amounting to an estimated 20 tcf. India has also confirmed that Mauritian EEZ may have oil. The Indian Navy has been carrying out hydrographic surveys in Mauritian waters for several years. Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique have all been developing infrastructure to support offshore energy companies.²⁷

²⁷ “Hydrocarbons race heats up in Indian Ocean”, *IHS Maritime 360*, June 29, 2014, at <http://www.ihsmaritime360.com/article/13384/hydrocarbons-race-heats-up-in-indian-ocean>

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS/ DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

Australia issues tsunami warning following a quake in Indian Ocean

The US Geological Survey registered an earthquake of 6.4-magnitude near southern Indian Ocean on June 14, 2014. It said that the quake hit at a depth of 7 Km in Keeling Islands, about 700 miles northwest of Australia's Cocos Islands at 11:10 GMT. The Cocos Islands are located 2750 Km northwest of Perth in Western Australia. This prompted Australia to issue a tsunami warning. There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties, but the Joint Australian Tsunami Warning Centre (JATWC) issued an alert and advised people not to swim in the sea, and to move away from beaches, harbours, marinas and coastal estuaries. The JATWC measured the quake at a magnitude of 6.6 at the Richter scale.²⁸

World Heritage Committee defers the decision to put Great Barrier Reef on danger list

During the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee in Doha from June 14-25, 2014, Qatar postponed a decision on whether to mark Australia's Great Barrier Reef on the List of World Heritage in Danger for 12 months. The Committee raised concerns over the site related to planned coastal developments, including development of ports and liquefied natural gas facilities. Australia has been asked to submit an updated report on the state of conservation of the site by February 1, 2015. The Great Barrier Reef covers an area of 348,000 Km², stretching down the north-eastern coastline of Australia. Inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1981, it contains 400 types of coral,

1,500 species of fish and 4,000 types of mollusc.²⁹

Deforestation in Indonesia overtakes Brazil

According to Indonesia's former head of forest data Ms Belinda Arunarwati Margono, her country has under-reported the clearing of primary rainforests in the country. Ms Belinda held the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry for seven years and is currently associated with South Dakota University. The official accounts and the UN figures maintain that, between 2000 and 2005, Indonesia was losing 310,000 hectares of forest annually. This rate of forest loss increased to 690,000 hectares annually during 2006-2010. This is notable that Indonesia has the third largest stretch of tropical forests after the Amazon and Congo. The exact figures vary from time to time and agency to agency, but a new study shows that the actual figures are nearly twice the rate of deforestation in Brazil, the global leader in the phenomenon. According to her calculations, the official figures of Indonesian deforestation might have been under reported by nearly 1 million hectares loss of forests in the last 12 years. The difference between the figures is due to the technical and bureaucratic problems in Indonesia.³⁰

Kenyan President urges the UN to take measures for ivory trade ban

Asserting that elephant poaching cannot be effectively combated as long as the international demand for illegal ivory remains high, the Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta requested the United Nations to take steps to reduce its global demand. The strength and ruthlessness

²⁸ "Quake hits Indian Ocean, Australia issues tsunami warning", *Times of India*, June 14, 2014, at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/rest-of-world/Quake-hits-Indian-Ocean-Australia-issues-tsunami-warning/articleshow/36558059.cms>

²⁹ "WHC puts Great Barrier Reef decision on hold", *World Maritime News*, June 19, 2014, at <http://worldmaritimeneeds.com/archives/127345/whc-puts-great-barrier-reef-decision-on-hold/>

³⁰ "Rate of deforestation in Indonesia overtakes Brazil, says study", *The Guardian*, June 29, 2014, at <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/jun/29/rate-of-deforestation-in-indonesia-overtakes-brazil-says-study>

of the poachers are driven by the strong global demand for ivory. Only an international combined effort could protect these animals from poaching. President Kenyatta was speaking at the United Nations Environmental Assembly in Nairobi. The assembly discussed ways to curb poaching and illegal trade in wildlife. Kenya lost 97 elephants and 59 rhinos due to poaching this year. The Kenyan President also welcomed the upgrading of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as the premier global organisation for environmental matters.³¹

Malaysia for global cooperation to protect oceans

Datuk Ewon Ebin, Science, Technology and Innovation Minister of Malaysia, said that for the benefit of future generations, Malaysia supports global efforts to safeguard, preserve and conserve the ecosystem of the world's oceans and resources. He was speaking during the World Ocean Week on June 8, 2014, on the theme *Together We Have the Power to Protect the Ocean*. The week is celebrated in the honour of the intrinsic values of the oceans and the products they provide. Mr Ebin also reminded that the problems like rising sea levels and dumping of alien species into local waters that threaten marine life are not to be taken lightly. According to him, more trans-boundary cooperation is needed at the regional and international levels. Malaysia, in the past, has also taken active part in large-scale marine ecosystem restoration projects in this context.³²

Plan to use mobile phones for disaster warning in Mozambique

The USAID Coastal City Adaptation Project in Mozambique seeks to improve climate resilience and adaptation in two Mozambican municipalities, Pemba

& Quelimane. The Human Network International (HNI) would support the project through its innovative, mobile-based data collection and information dissemination service. This will improve and support the monitoring and evaluation efforts of the project in data collection, analysis, visualisation; early warning and disaster risk notification systems. The mobile phone network in Mozambique can be used for improved early warning and post-disaster communication systems. It can complement the more traditional forms of communication like radio. HNI plans to work with the local administrations and the National Institute of Disaster Management (INGC) to get important early warning information directly on mobile phones.³³

Seychelles launches Integrated Ocean Information Services for Indian Ocean project

Seychelles has launched the Integrated Ocean Information Services for Indian Ocean project. It would increase Seychelles' capacity to deal with coastal disasters. For this project, the Seychelles National Meteorological Services (NMS) of the Ministry of Environment and Energy has collaborated with the Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early Warning System (RIMES) for Africa and Asia and the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS). The project; with financial support from the Ministry of Earth Sciences, government of India and INCOIS; will support NMS to provide localised tsunami risk information that would meet the Service Level -3 requirements of the International Oceanographic Commission's Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System (IOTWS). Comoros, Mozambique and Tanzania are the other countries under the umbrella of this project.³⁴

³¹ "President Uhuru calls for ivory trade ban", *The Star*, July 27, 2014, at <http://www.the-star.co.ke/news/article-173203/president-uhuru-calls-ivory-trade-ban>

³² "Malaysia supports global efforts to safeguard oceans", *The Star Online*, June 9, 2014, at <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2014/06/09/Minister-Malaysia-supports-global-efforts-to-safeguard-oceans/>

³³ "Mobile disaster warning systems in Mozambique", *Human Network International*, June 2, 2014, at <http://hni.org/mobile-disaster-warning-systems-mozambique/>

³⁴ "Development of Integrated Ocean Information Services for Indian Ocean project", *Seychelles Nation*, June 14, 2014, at <http://www.nation.sc/article.html?id=242007>

Maritime tourism around Al Halaniyat Islands banned by Tanzania

All marine tourism activities around the Al Halaniyat Islands of Oman in the Indian Ocean have been banned with immediate effect by the Government of Tanzania.

The step has been taken to preserve the threatened under-water cultural heritage on the Islands. All companies, individuals, yachts, and boat owners have been requested to stop all kinds of diving around the Al Halaniyat Islands immediately. Anyone who violates the ban would be legally prosecuted.³⁵

³⁵ “Tanzania bans marine tourism with immediate effect”, *Lusaka Voice*, June 9, 2014, at <http://lusakavoice.com/2014/06/09/tanzania-bans-marine-tourism/>

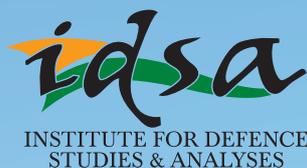
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The Africa, Latin America, Caribbean & UN Centre of IDSA focuses on understanding developments in the African and the Indian Ocean Region. The Centre also endeavours to analyse India's engagement with Latin American countries, particularly in forums such as the IBSA and BRICS. In addition, the Centre carries out research on the broader theme of India and the United Nations.

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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