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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 important developments in the region. India has agreed to restart 'Malabar' exercises with the US and Japanese navies. Iran's 28th Fleet ended its 76 day mission on the high seas. Malaysia plans to follow the US marine forces model for enhancing its maritime security. The Mozambican and Italian navies cooperated against illegal activities on sea. As part of international efforts to reduce piracy, the EU naval forces, recently, handed over five suspected pirates to the Seychelles for prosecution.

On the economic front, Iran-Sri Lanka Parliamentary Friendship Group has called for broadening of the Iran-Sri Lanka commercial ties. Malaysia banned foreign workers in fast-food restaurants. South Africa opened its first regional tourism marketing office in the African continent.

As part of a new research partnership to identify the causes and impacts of marine heat waves, India and Australia will launch bio robotic floats in the Indian Ocean. Recently, Bangladesh released the country's first ever genetically modified seeds. Moreover, Australia's Great Barrier Reef Marine Park authority has allowed dumping of dredged up material in the ocean around the reef for expansion of a coal port.

Hope the readers will find this issue useful.

Ruchita Beri

Editor

MARITIME SECURITY

Australia assures no further intrusions in Indonesian waters

Following repeated incursions of the Australian military into the Indonesian waters, Jakarta demanded that the operations to crackdown on people-smuggling boats be suspended. Australia responded by vowing that there would be no further intrusions into the Indonesian waters. It is to be noted that the new conservative government in Australia has re-introduced a policy of turning back asylum-seeker boats, many of which depart from Indonesian ports. Australia admitted that there had been several inadvertent intrusions into Indonesian waters as part of its Operation Sovereign Borders but it also sticks to its policy designed to halt the arrival of asylum-seekers on unauthorised boats. The Australian foreign minister told that they have taken steps to ensure that intrusion into the Indonesian territorial waters does not happen again. Now, Australia expects cooperation from Indonesia in patrolling the waters where people-smuggling boats are being launched. The people-smuggling affair has already led to over 1,000 deaths at sea.¹

India agrees to restart 'Malabar' exercise with Japanese and US navies

India invited Japan to participate in the tripartite 'Malabar' exercise along with the United States Navy. The proposed tripartite exercise will be finalised by the next Indian government that takes office after the general election. The invitation was extended during Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's three day visit to India on January 25, 2014. The drills are expected to deepen security and defence ties with Japan. It is also expected

that drills will bolster long-pending nuclear ties, trade in rare earth materials and other hi-tech and financial collaboration. China had previously raised its objections to the exercise highlighting them as military alliance against Beijing.²

India to fast-track the acquisition of US-2i amphibian search and rescue aircraft

The negotiations to acquire Japan's ShinMaywa US-2i amphibious search-and-rescue aircraft are being fast-tracked by India's Ministry of Defence (MoD). Although the tender for the acquisition process is yet to be dispatched, Military officials said that the two governments are in "broad agreement" over supplying the Indian Navy (IN) with 15 of the unarmed seaplanes at a cost of around US\$1.65 billion. Official sources said India will acquire two US-2is in fly-away condition and licence-build the remaining 13 locally. An Indian Navy Official said that in order to get around a self-imposed ban on arms exports, Japan is removing Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) systems from US-2i. If the deal goes through, it will be Japan's first materiel export since the Second World War. The deal will be discussed in Tokyo in March 2014 by the joint working group set up during Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's four-day visit to Delhi in January 2014.³

Iran's 28th Fleet ends its 76 day mission on high seas

Iran's 28th Fleet of warships berthed at country's southern port of Bandar Abbas after returning from a 76 day mission on high seas on January 30, 2014. The fleet is comprised of Alborz destroyer, Bandar Abbas

¹ "Australia vows no more intrusions in Indonesian waters", *The Star*, January 18, at <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Regional/2014/01/18/Australia-vows-no-more-intrusions-in-Indonesian-waters/>

² "India agrees to restart tripartite naval drills with Japan, US", *IHS Jane Review*, January 26, 2014 at <http://www.janes.com/article/33095/india-agrees-to-restart-tripartite-naval-drills-with-japan-us>

³ "India to fast-track US-2i amphibian purchase", *IHS Jane Review*, January 29, 2014 at <http://www.janes.com/article/33221/india-to-fast-track-us-2i-amphibian-purchase>

logistic-combat warship, Younes heavy submarine and a Bell 212 Twin Huey helicopter. The flotilla had set off a journey in November 2013 to the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the northern tip of the Indian Ocean. The naval fleet managed to ensure the safe passage of more than 577 cargo ships and oil tankers belonging to Iran or foreign countries, and thwarted a series of pirate attacks against Iranian and foreign vessels in the international waters during its overseas voyage. According to Lieutenant Commander of the Iranian Navy for Operations, Admiral Siavash Jareh, the 28th fleet was among the largest fleets that have ever been deployed to the high seas. Under the terms of several UN Security Council resolutions, nations can deploy warships to the Gulf of Aden and coastal waters of Somalia to protect their vessels against the pirates. Iran's naval forces have increased their presence in international waters to protect naval routes and provide security for trade vessels and oil tankers. Since November 2008, the Iranian navy has conducted anti-piracy missions in the Gulf of Aden and Bab el-Mendeb strait to protect the country's cargo ships and oil tankers against pirates.⁴

Malaysia looks at the US maritime forces model for its own security

The Malaysian Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein told that his country will strengthen the capabilities of its armed forces' maritime division by following the model used by the United States Marine Corps Forces. He informed that he had discussed about the steps to be taken by both countries to realise the plan with the US side. Maritime specialists would visit Malaysia to discuss the matter in detail. The cooperation is expected to enhance the abilities of the Malaysian armed forces' maritime division. Hishammuddin met Pacific territories division heads,

including the US Pacific Fleet commander Admiral Harry B. Harris Jr, Pacific Air Forces commander General Herbert J. Carlisle and US Army Pacific commanding general General Vincent Brooks, during his tour of the United States Pacific Command base. He also told that their discussions focused on regional issues and cross-border security that involve human trafficking, weapons smuggling and terrorist threats.⁵

Italian warships cooperate with the Mozambican Navy

Four Italian warships have programmed to remain in the Mozambican waters in order to undertake training activities with the country's navy for two months. They intend for a mutual exchange of experiences in the fight against maritime piracy. The ships belong to the Italian 30th Naval Group. The two navies would undertake training exercises in for the protection of commercial shipping, trafficking, fight against piracy and rescue at sea in the event of maritime accidents. The programme has been described as a part of the Italian Navy's intention to increase and strengthen cooperation with other navies of the world. It has also been clarified by the Italian Navy that the presence of the warships has nothing to do with the current politico-military tension in parts of Mozambique. The doctors on board one of the ships named the "Cavour", during the stay of the Italian ships, are carrying out surgery on the Mozambican children with facial deformations.⁶

University of Seychelles launches new sea security courses

The University of Seychelles has launched two new short courses – Maritime Crime and Law Enforcement and Maritime Crime and Correctional Administration – in maritime security. The United Nations Office on

⁴ "Iranian naval fleet ends 76-day mission in high seas", *Tasnim News Agency*, January 31, 2014 at <http://www.tasnimnews.com/English/Home/Single/265458>

⁵ "Hisham: Maritime to use US model", *The Star*, January 18, 2014, at <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2014/01/18/Hisham-Maritime-to-use-US-model/>

⁶ "Mozambique: Italian warships cooperate with navy", *All Africa*, January 28, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201401290066.html>

Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has developed the courses in a partnership with the Australian government. The lecturers for the courses are from the Regional Anti-Piracy Prosecution & Intelligence Coordination Centre (Rappicc) and the reputed Australian universities. The first batch in the courses consists of students from over two dozen countries including Kenya, Tanzania, Mauritius and Seychelles. The second batch is expected to be admitted here in May. With the introduction of these courses, Seychelles emerges as a centre of excellence for maritime security studies. In addition to the educational component, the courses have given the students from the different countries an opportunity to meet and to learn from each other's experiences.⁷

EU NAVFOR transfers five suspected pirates to Seychelles

The EU Naval Force (EU NAVFOR) Somalia Operation Atalanta flagship, FS Siroco, transferred five men suspected to be pirates to the Republic of Seychelles on January 29, 2014. The crew of an Indian Dhow had been freed from five suspected pirates on

January 18. This happened in a joint operation of FS Siroco and Japanese assets in support of the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF/CTF 151). Significant amount of evidence have been collected by the EU Naval Force and it intends to support a legal finish where possible. The Republic of the Seychelles, therefore, has accepted the transfer of the suspected pirates to prosecute them. The EU and Seychelles have developed a successful partnership in the fight against piracy while Seychelles is playing a leading role. A transfer agreement signed in December 2009 has allowed for 47 suspected pirates to be transferred out of which 33 pirates have been prosecuted yet. The transfers are important as it is generally felt that the goals of operations against piracy would not be fully achieved without the ability to prosecute those involved in piracy. The EU as the chair of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) in 2014 has expressed its keenness to mobilise international support to eradicate Somali piracy, both by addressing the symptoms at sea as well as by addressing the root causes of piracy ashore.⁸

⁷ "New courses to help boost security at sea", *Seychelles Nation*, January 28, 2014, at <http://www.nation.sc/article.html?id=240505>

⁸ "Suspect pirates apprehended by EU Naval Force flagship transferred to the Seychelles", *EUNAVFOR Somalia*, January 30, 2014, at <http://eunavfor.eu/suspect-pirates-apprehended-by-cu-naval-force-flagship-transferred-to-the-seychelles/>

ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Member of Iran-Sri Lanka Parliamentary Friendship Group calls for broadening of Iran-Sri Lanka economic ties

Member of Iran-Sri Lanka Parliamentary Friendship Group Mohammad Firouzirefferingto, during a recent visit of an Iranian delegation to Sri Lanka, said that the officials from both the countries discussed the possibility of construction of a number of joint development projects that included building two dams with the capacity of generating 120 megawatts of electricity as well as construction of a water supply project in the Southern parts of the country. In a meeting with Sri Lankan Ambassador to Iran in Tehran, Chairman of the parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Alaeddin Boroujerdi extended full support of the legislature for enhancing mutual cooperation with Sri Lanka in various fields. The Sri Lankan envoy, for his part, pointed to the parliaments' role in the expansion of the relations and said that Iran had a special place in Sri Lanka's foreign diplomacy. Iran and Sri Lanka have had official diplomatic relations since 1961.⁹

Malaysia bans foreign workers in fast-food restaurants

The fast-food restaurants in Malaysia cannot hire foreign workers any more due to a ban by the Malaysian government. According to Malaysia's cabinet committee on foreign workers and illegal immigrants, locals are keen to take up these jobs. At least one out of six workers in Malaysia is a low-skilled immigrant. This has happened despite government efforts to make it

more difficult and expensive to hire foreigners for work as this leads to frustration among some Malaysians. Although the government is looking to curb the influx of foreign workers in the sector, business players are worried if they will be able to find adequate local staff to keep their operations and services running smoothly.¹⁰

First South African regional tourism marketing office in Africa

South Africa opened its first Tourism Office in the African continent in Lagos, Nigeria. According to the South African Tourism Minister Marthinus van Schalkwyk, it is an invitation for Nigerians, Ghanaians and other countries in West Africa to explore the beauty of South Africa. This regional office intends to grow the presence of South Africa as a tourism hub. South Africa's tourism sector continued to grow despite the pressure brought about by the global recession in 2008. Although tourist arrivals from the United States and the Eurozone have not shown a large increase, tourists from the rest of Africa recorded positive growth. Global interest in visiting Africa is at an all-time high, and South Africa intends to tap the opportunity.¹¹

South Africa ignores gas discoveries in Mozambique

The South African government has been accused by Johan de Vos, chief executive officer of the Pretoria-based energy firm Gigajoule, of ignoring the huge natural gas reserves in Mozambique. He expressed his shock that South Africa's revised 20-year Integrated

⁹ "Senior MP: Iran, Sri Lanka to broaden economic ties soon", *FARS News Agency*, January 26, 2014 at <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13921106001416>

¹⁰ "Malaysian fast-food restaurants face foreign worker ban", *BBC News*, January 14, 2014, at <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-25725310>

¹¹ "SA Tourism opens first office in Africa", *SouthAfrica.Info*, January 29, 2014, at <http://www.southafrica.info/news/tourism-290114.htm#.Ux781s7m42E>

Resource Plan (IRP) ignores the gas discoveries in Rovuma Basin, off the coast of northern Mozambique. As deposits in the basin are known as the fourth-largest in the world, the plan to import Rovuma Basin gas would solve the energy crisis faced by the South African electricity company Eskom. It would also avoid the need to build further coal-fired power stations.¹²

Tanzania to help Madagascar on sanctions

Madagascar has been assured by Tanzania for its cooperation to help it come out of sanctions imposed by the international community to compel it to retain

democracy. The Tanzanian Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Mr Bernard Membe, was in Madagascar to represent President Jakaya Kikwete in the swearing-in ceremony of the new President, Mr. Hery Rajaonarimampianina. Mr. Membe felt that Madagascar has opened a new chapter where fresh political and economic cooperation will ensue not only with Tanzania, but the entire South African Development Cooperation (SADC) and the African Union (AU). He said that Tanzania was ready to see to it that sanctions imposed to the country are lifted and the country resumes its seat in the SADC and AU.¹³

¹² “South Africa accused of ignoring Mozambican gas”, *All Africa*, January 27, 2014, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201401270366.html>

¹³ “Dar offers Madagascar assistance on sanctions”, *Daily News Online*, January 27, 2014, at <http://www.dailynews.co.tz/index.php/local-news/27438-dar-offers-madagascar-assistance-on-sanctions>

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS/ DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

Australia's Great Barrier Reef Marine Park authority allows dumping around the reef for expansion of coal port

In order to allow the expansion of Abbot Point, a coal port in Queensland, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has allowed dumping of as 3 million cubic meters of dredged-up material into the oceans surrounding the reef. The expansion will help in increasing the export of coal from Queensland by 70 per cent and it will also unlock Australian Dollar 28 billion in coal development projects that will create jobs. However, environmentalists have criticised the decision, highlighting that the dumping of sludge in order to make way for more ships to access the port will threaten coral and fish around the reef. The project has been financed by two Indian companies - Adani Group and GVK - in partnership with Australia's Hancock Coal. The expanded Abbot point will become the largest coal loading facility in the world.¹⁴

First ever genetically modified seeds released in Bangladesh

Country's first ever genetically modified crop has been released by the authorities in Bangladesh amid criticism from environmental groups. Following approval from the government's biosafety regulator, Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI), has begun distributing the seedlings of four types of genetically modified aubergine (Brinjal). The officials claim that they have released the varieties after extensive tests on environmental and health impacts. The head of BARI says that these are quite safe for crop biodiversity and

human health while the environmentalist groups claim that the government has released the seeds hurriedly and without enough research. Bangladesh has now, with the release, become the 29th nation to grow genetically modified (GM) crops and the first to grow GM aubergine. The seeds have been modified and made resistant to its most common diseases which can devastate 50-70 percent of a crop. It is noted that the Philippines and India have dropped plans to introduce these seeds in similar contexts.¹⁵

India and Australia will launch bio robotic floats in the Indian Ocean

As part of a new India-Australia research partnership to identify the causes and impacts of marine heat waves, bio robotic floats armed with revolutionary new sensors will be launched in the Indian Ocean. These Argo floats operating in the open ocean will provide real time data on ocean temperature and salinity. The pilot project is led by Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation in collaboration with Indian National Institute of Oceanography and Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services. The project is funded by the Australian government under the Australia-India Strategic Research Fund.¹⁶

Prince of Wales Young Sustainability Prize for Indonesian

Mr. Gamal Albinsaid from Indonesia was awarded the Prince of Wales Young Sustainability Entrepreneur Prize by Prince Charles of UK. He has been awarded for initiating a project to help poor communities in Indonesia

¹⁴ "Australia allows dumping around Barrier Reef", *The Wall Street Journal*, January 31, 2014 at <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303743604579354070095020890>

¹⁵ "Bangladesh releases first GM food", *The Star*, January 24, 2014, at <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Regional/2014/01/24/Bangladesh-releases-first-GM-food/>

¹⁶ "India, Australia to launch bio robotic floats in Indian Ocean", *Live Mint*, January 29, 2014 at <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/TCxiHj1jvL9RXZkleLONoK/India-Australia-to-launch-bio-robotic-floats-in-Indian-Ocea.html>

access health and education services by selling recycled rubbish. Prince Charles, giving the prize, said that it was “baffling” that people’s “blind trust in science and technology” does not extend to climate science. He dismissed climate change “deniers” as the “headless chicken brigade”. The prince had previously called on politicians to face down anti-climate change skeptics and corporate lobbyists. The prince has campaigned against global warming for many years and has seen himself criticised.¹⁷

Tsunami may be less financially harmful than floods

A scientist said that a slow response from the government in flood mitigation may cost the country even more than a tsunami. Due to the sudden and great effect of tsunami, people always respond to it as soon as possible but the response remains quite different towards floods. The floods are often addressed as small matters and the government lacks a sense of urgency in fixing such situations. Steps for flood prevention are not taken properly and the public would only realize the impact on the strike of a massive flood. According to Jan, when heavy rainfall inundated Jakarta in 2007, the capital suffered a loss of US\$774.4 million on current rates; while in the 2012 flood, when the affected area was actually smaller than the floods of five years before, the loss increased to US\$2.8 billion.¹⁸

Malaysia to promote ‘tagal’ system to conserve fisheries and environment

Tagal, a community-based river conservation effort, initiated in Sabah has brought good catch during the occasional harvest. Tourism activities have also flourished in some of the related communities. The

effort puts an off to fishing activities in certain sections of rivers to allow fish and other creatures to flourish and then fish in these conservation areas only once or twice a year. More than 50,000 tourists had visited villages near the foothills of Mount Kinabalu to see the tagal system last year. The practice is useful in rehabilitating fish populations and conserving the natural environment. Some 511 tagal systems, with the cooperation of local communities, have been initiated by the Malaysian Fisheries Department and plans are there to expand the effort further to 600 more locations over the next two years.¹⁹

Demand for enquiry into the destruction of mangrove forest reserve in Penang

Fishermen in Kam-pung Sungai Tuntung in Malaysia claim that the destruction of mangroves by crab farming operators has affected their income adversely. The Perak Forestry Department has been requested by the Consumers’ Association of Penang (CAP) to investigate the destruction of the mangrove forest reserve in the region. The incident not only violates the National Forestry Act 1984 but also threatens the environment and the livelihood of local fishermen. Their two major sources of income – crabs and shellfish – are now reduced in number and may soon be not there. Their earnings have also slumped. The association urges the Land and Minerals Department (PTG), the Fisheries Department and the Department of Environment (DOE) to enquire into the problem and take appropriate and immediate action. CAP is enraged on the fact that a project threatening the environment and the livelihood of the people is allowed to operate in a forest reserve. It hopes that the Perak Forestry Department will make public the findings of its

¹⁷ “Prince rebukes ‘headless chicken’ climate change deniers”, *BBC News*, January 31, 2014, at <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-25984246>

¹⁸ “Slow reaction to floods may cause higher financial loss than a tsunami”, *Jakarta Globe*, January 25, 2014, at <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/news/slow-reaction-to-floods-may-cause-higher-financial-loss-than-a-tsunami/>. Value of the currency has been converted as per the exchange rate between the Indonesian Rupiah and the US Dollar on March 11, 2014.

¹⁹ “‘Tagal’ helps villages catch tourists”, *The Star*, January 20, 2014, at <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2014/01/20/Tagal-helps-villages-catch-tourists/>

investigations and compensate the fishermen for their losses.²⁰

Tourism vital to 'greening' global economy

Speaking at the opening of the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) 2014 Travel Exchange (Travex) at Borneo Convention Centre Kuching (BCCK), Malaysia's Tourism and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz said that the importance of the tourism sector has been identified as vital to "greening" the global economy. He urged the ASEAN members to work hand in hand to raise understanding, participation and commitment of people about the importance of tourism to economic growth and the environment. He noted that many countries chose tourism as one of the main pillars for their economic and national development. According to him, right investment can make tourism a leading change agent towards a green economy and job creation with simultaneous improvement in resource efficiency, minimising environmental degradation rise in environmental awareness among tourists.²¹

TOL proposal condemned by the Malaysian environmental experts

Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri G. Palanivel's proposal to provide illegal farm operators in Cameron Highlands temporary occupation licences (TOLs) has been condemned by the Environmental experts. Balu Perumal, the conservation head of the Malaysian Nature Society, said that the TOL was in fact the source of Cameron Highlands' woes due to the nature of its impermanence. Due to its temporary nature, the farmers had no incentives to

invest in their farms and it was impossible to continue issuing TOLs while promoting environmental sustainability. The authorities, therefore, should look for a long-term answer. The TOL also does not provide a legal platform for government agencies to be involved in helping farmers as the supervision of the land use is solely under the state's district office. The proposal was based on the fact that the farmers had worked on the land for years, with some already exporting their crops. But the president of Regional Environmental Awareness Cameron Highlands Mr. R. Ramakrishnan also condemned the proposal as an "extremely bad idea".²²

Endangered animals found crammed at South Africa airport

More than 1,600 animals were found crammed into two crates at the OR Tambo International Airport in South Africa. Animal inspectors told that some 400 endangered amphibians and reptiles have died due to dehydration and improper shipping. The survivors are being treated at a local zoo. They were probably destined for the exotic pet market in the US. About over 1,200 of the animals have survived and some others have got irreparable damage. The animals were discovered after an inspector from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NSPCA) noticed "a bad smell" during a routine cargo inspection. The animals included at least 30 different species of frogs, chameleons, lizards and toads and geckos. Many of the recovered animals were classified as endangered, vulnerable, or threatened, according to the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites).²³

²⁰ "Investigate destruction of mangrove forest reserve", *The Star*, January 23, at <http://www.thestar.com.my/Opinion/Letters/2014/01/23/Investigate-destruction-of-mangrove-forest-reserve/>

²¹ "Tourism proven to be among sectors vital to 'greening' global economy, says minister", *The Star*, January 22, at <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Community/2014/01/22/Financial-and-environmental-wellbeing-Tourism-proven-to-be-among-sectors-vital-to-greening-global-ec/>

²² "Environmental experts slam Camerons TOL proposal", *The Star*, January 27, 2014, at <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2014/01/27/Environmental-experts-slam-Camerons-TOL-proposal/>

²³ "Hundreds of dead animals found at South Africa airport", *BBC News*, January 31, 2014, at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-25877368>

Huge illegal ivory consignment seized in Tanzania

A consignment of illegal ivory has been seized from two people at the Dar es Salaam port. The freshness of the tusks means that the animals were killed in the last month. The killing of elephants and other wild animals has increased sharply since the anti-poaching operation has been suspended after a controversy. Reports of human rights abuses due to the strict law which allowed a shoot-to-kill policy against poachers have led to the suspension. The result is that 60 elephants were “butchered” in November and December compared with only two in the month of October when the strict anti-poaching policy was introduced. Poaching has increased in recent years across sub-Saharan Africa with criminal gangs slaughtering elephants for ivory markets in Asia.²⁴

New roads in Tanzania’s Serengeti cause worries

The pressures of the modern world are threatening Serengeti’s delicate natural balance as the Government

of Tanzania wants to improve the roads around the park. There is no issue more pressing than the state of the roads for villagers living in the communities surrounding the Serengeti as the road is very rough. Tanzania’s government has started to upgrade these roads but the environmentalists object the effort. These roads cut across the Serengeti path that the huge wildebeest herds take in their annual migration between Kenya and Tanzania. Environmentalists fear the park’s delicate ecosystem would collapse if the wild route is dissected. Trying to reconcile with the environmental concerns, the Tanzanian government has promised the section of the road across the national park will remain a slower, gravel road. But the problem remains as the roads will be close to the park boundaries in the east and west. This closeness of the roads will again put the pressure to build a highway. Several solutions have been suggested including a bridge over the rift valley in the region but the cost is a big obstacle.²⁵

²⁴ “Tanzania seizes illegal ivory in Dar es Salaam”, *BBC News*, January 3, 2014, at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-25590669>

²⁵ “Worries over new roads in Tanzania’s Serengeti”, *BBC News*, January 17, 2014, at <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-25319245>

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Africa, Latin America, Caribbean & UN Centre

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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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