

Silk road

ARMED with a plethora of trade deals and investment funds, Beijing's vision of reviving the "maritime silk road" with Southeast Asia has caught the imagination of policymakers and observers in the region.

Experts say China's neighbours welcome closer economic ties. But doubts about Beijing's intentions — and whether strings may be attached to the project — appear to be making some reluctant to embrace the vision of political and security co-operation with China over maritime issues.

Source: SCMP.

COM

Floating classroom

The frame and keels are in place as the Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk's new research vessel begins to take shape, with the boat expected to hit the water late next spring.

The \$2.6 million, 65-foot catamaran is being built at the Dectector shipyard in Mamaroneck, New York. The new vessel will offer both a climate-controlled indoor classroom and an outdoor research space with total capacity of 65, more than twice that of the aquarium's current 40-foot boat. Source: NORWALKCITIZENONLINE.COM

Six arrested

Six Britons have been arrested in India after their ship sailed into the country's waters allegedly carrying a huge cache of illegal weapons.

The men — some of whom are believed to be ex-SAS — were among the crew of MV Seaman Guard Ohio which Indian officials branded a 'floating armoury'.

Police said they seized 35 assault rifles and nearly 5700 rounds of ammunition from guards on the US-owned vessel.

The Indian coast guard stopped the ship, which belongs to security firm AdvanFort, on Saturday and detained 33 crew members.

Source: DAILYMAIL.CO.UK

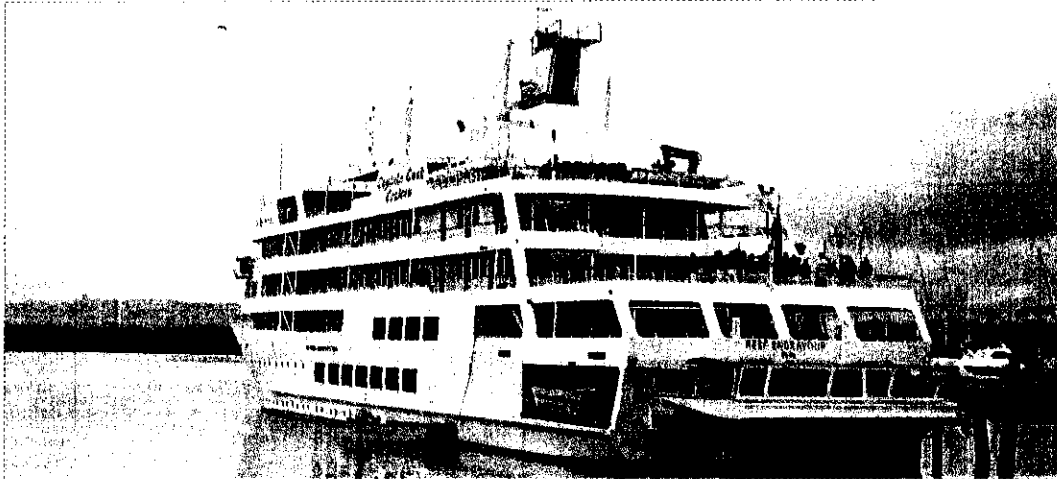
Pirates threats

The International Chamber of Commerce's International Maritime Bureau has revealed that piracy on the world's seas is at its lowest third-quarter level since 2006, but warns of the threat of continuing violent attacks off the East and West coasts of Africa.

The latest IMB Piracy Report shows 188 piracy incidents in the first nine months of 2013, down from 233 for the same period last year.

Hostage-taking has also fallen markedly, with 266 people taken hostage this year, compared with 458 in the first three quarters of 2012.

In the first nine months of 2013, IMB's global figures show pirates hijacked 10 vessels, fired at 17, and boarded 140. A further 21 attacks were thwarted. In total 266 crew were taken hostage and 34 kidnapped. One seafarer was killed, 20 were injured, and one is reported missing.



MV Reef Endeavour at Denarau Marina in Nadi yesterday.

Picture: BALJEET SINGH

New cruise haven

By REPEKA NASIKO

TAPPING into uncharted waters, premier cruise service providers Captain Cook Cruises yesterday launched its inaugural 11-day cruise to the Lau Group.

Captain Cook Cruises executive director Jackie Hawthorth-Charlton said the cruise was an extension of their already successful cruises to the Yasawa Group and the Northern Division.

"Captain Cook Cruises has been operating in Fiji since 1996 and we started with our bread and butter itinerary doing three or four nights at the Yasawa Group," she said.

"But we were getting so many past passengers who wanted to explore other parts of Fiji.

"Fiji has such a diverse culture and more than 300 islands to explore — that was one of the reasons our passengers kept asking whether we offer cruises to other areas."

She said the cruise liner decided to explore new itineraries to give guests more opportunities travelling to the other island groups.

"Our first one was the Colonial Fiji Cruise which was to Levuka and then our second foray into this area was the Four Cultures of Fiji experience and that actually gave us an opportunity to offer guests more islands, more cultures to discover.

"But passengers were still not satisfied with this and our business has to continue to grow and improve so we decided to approach the people of the Lau group particularly Vanua Balavu and make a trip into that area of Fiji."

She said the 11-night cruise offered guests opportunities to

experience off-shore travels to villages in the Lau Group.

"We're starting off at Taveuni and then we're going across to the top of the Lau Group, cruising all the way down to Vanua Balavu, Bay of Islands, to Fulaga, Vuqava, Totoya and then onto Kadavu where we will then continue onto the Western coasts.

"This will be an adventure and whether it goes according to plan remains to be seen but we are very excited and optimistic about this new cruise."

MV Reef Endeavour Captain Chris Marshall said they did some navigation work when they were planning the whole itinerary of the cruise.

"What we saw were some very good sights and areas that we could take our passengers and it is a very good route especially for guests and we hope that they enjoy themselves on this adventure," he said.

While launching the inaugural cruise, Minister for Works, Transport and Public Utilities Timoci Natuva said the cruise liner would result in the creation of jobs for the people of Lau.

"New employment opportunities and village businesses will also be created by this new development," he said.

"With respect to new employment in the tourism sector, tour guides and entertainers in the islands are some form of employment that will be created by this.

"It will also provide an opportunity for small village businesses such as the sale of art and craft products such as wood carvings, baskets and necklaces by the villages.

"It is an opportune time for villagers to showcase their talents."



Members of the Fiji Police band entertain guests on board MV Reef Endeavour at Denarau Marina in Nadi yesterday.

Picture: BALJEET SINGH



Guests on board MV Reef Endeavour at Denarau Marina in Nadi yesterday.

Picture: BALJEET SINGH



Captain Chris Marshall welcomes Minister for Works Timoci Natuva on board MV Reef Endeavour in Nadi yesterday.

Picture: BALJEET SINGH

No matter what.

HAMBURG SÜD