

Designating the Straits of Malacca as a PSSA

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The Straits of Malacca is a golden heritage of the littoral states such as Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore. It is not only rich in marine resources but one of the oldest and busiest shipping lanes in the world. Malacca Straits serves as a primary conduit for the movement of cargo and human traffics between Indo-European region and the rest of Asia and Australia. Every year about RM 3.8 trillion worth of goods and services passes through the region formed by the Straits of Malacca and other associated shipping routes. By using the Malacca Straits, the Japanese petroleum industry saves up to RM 1.3 billion annually. In the Asia Pacific, Straits of Malacca is one of the most crowded Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOC) which is transited by over 72% of tankers from Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean.

The various recent environmental changes in the straits have become a real threat to the marine resources in the area. It may become critical as this strait is known to harbour a rich marine life, such as mangroves, coral reefs, seagrass and also other pelagic life. From the shore, different types of pollutants from industries, agriculture, and land used activities and domestic wastes are discharged into the strait. Along the coast, sand mining activities, development in mangroves swamps and land reclamation have degraded the habitat for marine life. Due to the critical role of the Malacca Straits in the socio-economic development of the country, the issues on the sustainable management of the Straits have to be taken seriously by the relevant authorities. With the increase of economic activities in the East Asian Region and the Pacific, the traffic in the Straits of Malacca becomes busier. Rapid development without consideration towards the environment and the resulting pollution along the Straits would result in negative impact not only to marine life but to the people of the littoral states either in economy, social or health. Currently, the Straits have never been managed on a holistic basis. Transboundary management agreements have tended to focus so far on navigational regimes and have yet to adopt a broad based approach to managing both living and non-living resources of the waterway.

Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSA) can be a useful management mechanism to protect designated marine protected areas that are vulnerable to shipping activities. The designation of the PSSA would enable the Coastal States to protect valuable ecosystems such as coral reefs, coastal wetlands, endangered species or habitat, marine park and economic dependency on the areas. Taken into consideration the traffic volume and carrying capacity of ships transiting the



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Straits, it is important to carry out a feasibility study in assessing the possibility of the Straits of Malacca as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area.