



Huayang Biweekly Brief

The South China Sea and China

Volume 1, Issue 1 (2026)

AUGUST 1

China Issues Management Measures for the Huangyan Dao National Nature Reserve.

China's Ministry of Natural Resources, National Forestry and Grassland Administration, China Coast Guard (CCG) and Hainan Provincial Government jointly issued the *Management Measures for the Huangyan Dao National Nature Reserve*. Covering 3,523.67 hectares, the reserve is divided into a 1,242.55-hectare core protection zone and a 2,281.12-hectare general control zone. The measures establish arrangements for ecological monitoring and restoration, routine patrols and law enforcement, while prohibiting unauthorized fishing, mining, and the harvesting or extraction of coral, coral reefs, giant clams and other marine resources. The South China Sea Bureau under the Ministry of Natural Resources is responsible for the reserve's daily conservation and management, while the CCG and Hainan authorities providing support for law enforcement and emergency response.

PLA-Affiliated Commentary Defends China's Administration over Huangyan Dao.

A commentary published by Jun Zhengping, a social media account affiliated with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Daily, reiterated China's sovereignty over Huangyan Dao and argued that China's strengthened administration and control of the area have a firm historical and legal basis. It linked the latest management measures to China's 2024 declaration of territorial sea baselines around Huangyan Dao and described the PLA and CCG exercise conducted around Huangyan Dao on August 1 as responses to recent Philippine actions in the area.

PLA Conducts Joint Naval-Air Exercise around Huangyan Dao.

The PLA Southern Theater Command conducted a joint naval-air training exercise in the territorial sea and airspace of Huangyan Dao and surrounding areas, focusing on reconnaissance and early warning, deterrence patrol, air-sea control and joint strike. The exercise involved a naval formation including the *Zhanjiang* and *Qilianshan*, as well as bomber formations supported by airborne early-warning aircraft. The exercise featured simulated maritime

Key Takeaways

- China continued to strengthen its administrative presence and law-enforcement activities at and around Huangyan Dao.
- Huangyan Dao emerged as a focal point of escalating China-Philippines tensions.
- China continued to advance marine ecological conservation and resource management.
- China-Indonesia maritime cooperation advanced through a joint naval exercise.
- AI applications and deep-sea research remained key priorities in China's marine development.



*Huangyan Dao, part of China's Zhongsha Qundao, has a unique coral reef ecosystem and distinctive geological formations. It supports rich biodiversity, including rare and endangered species such as hawksbill turtles, green sea turtles, and *Tridacna crocea*. In September 2025, the State Council approved the establishment of the Huangyan Dao National Nature Reserve. Photo credit: CGTN.*

strikes and air-defense operations, and the rescue of hostages aboard a simulated hijacked vessel using helicopters and shipborne boats.

CCG Conducts Law-Enforcement Drills near Huangyan Dao.

The CCG conducted law-enforcement and control drills near Huangyan Dao, focusing on visit, board, search and seizure (VBSS), interdiction of force entry and forced towing. CCG spokesperson Jiang Lue said the coast guard would step up law enforcement and control in the surrounding waters.

AUGUST 3

China Highlights AI Applications in Marine Science and Industry.

Xinhua highlighted the expanding use of AI in China's marine research and industry. At oilfields in the eastern South China Sea, AI-enabled drones can inspect more than 70 km of subsea pipelines in under one hour, compared with more than four hours using conventional inspection vessels. Elsewhere, AI-assisted screening reduced the time required to evaluate more than 80,000 small molecules derived from marine organisms and traditional Chinese medicine from at least 36 months to 28 days. Meanwhile, the "Pangu" AI ocean-forecasting model has cut the time required for ocean forecasting from days to minutes.

AUGUST 5

Hainan Launches Joint Enforcement Operation During South China Sea Fishing Moratorium.

The Hainan Coast Guard, in coordination with provincial fisheries and public security authorities, launched the "Huanqiong Hugang 2026" joint operation targeting illegal fishing during the final stage of the South China Sea summer fishing moratorium. The operation combined regular daytime patrols with surprise nighttime inspections. Authorities deployed law-enforcement vessels on 56 sorties, boarded and inspected 64 Chinese fishing vessels, detained two vessels for violations, and drove away foreign fishing vessels on 10 occasions.

Sansha Conducts "Love the Islands Day" Activities across Islands and Reefs.

Sansha organized simultaneous "Love the Islands Day" activities across its islands and reefs, with military personnel, police officers and residents carrying out mosquito-control work, removing harmful plants and cleaning public areas. The activities form part of the city's regular efforts to improve island environments and strengthen ecological conservation across the islands and reefs under its administration.

China Issues Environmental Approvals for Two Offshore Oil and Gas Projects.

The Ministry of Ecology and Environment issued environmental approvals for two offshore oil and gas projects operated by China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC). The Weizhou 12-1 PUQ-to-Weizhou Terminal Natural Gas Pipeline Project, located in the Weizhou oilfield group in the Beibu Gulf, involves the construction of an approximately 32.8-km subsea natural gas pipeline linking the WZ12-1 PUQ platform to the Weizhou terminal. The Enping 15-1 adjustment project, located in the Enping oilfield group in the Pearl River Mouth Basin, involves 30 adjustment wells across seven existing offshore platforms.

AUGUST 7

China's Ministry of National Defense Responds to Philippine Actions Over Huangyan Dao.

Following the Philippines' deposit with the United Nations of a so-called "official nautical chart" covering Huangyan Dao and its surrounding maritime zones, and its criticism of recent Chinese exercises, China's Ministry of National Defense reiterated that Huangyan Dao is Chinese territory and that China is the only country entitled under international law to declare the baselines of Huangyan Dao's territorial sea. The ministry described military and law-enforcement exercises around Huangyan Dao as a warning against Philippine violations and provocations and said the Chinese military would take firm and effective countermeasures against further provocations.

Baodao 21-1 Gas Field Cluster Development Project Enters Environmental Review.

The Ministry of Ecology and Environment accepted for review the environmental impact assessment documents for CNOOC's Baodao 21-1 Gas field Cluster Development Project in the South China Sea and opened them to public comment from August 7 to 20.

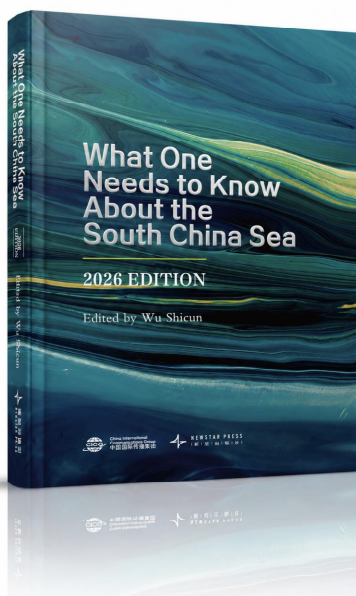
AUGUST 8

Black-naped Terns Found Breeding on Ganquan Island in Sansha.

During routine shoreline patrols and marine litter clean-up on Ganquan Island, community officials and resident fishermen discovered several black-naped terns' nests among the rocks, including newly hatched chicks. The discovery documents active seabird breeding on the amid ongoing ecological patrols and environmental management.



Porous coral rocks provide natural nesting sites for black-naped terns. According to the island's elderly residents, Ganquan Island has long been a favorite habitat for seabirds. Every year between April and August, the birds arrive right on schedule. Since this spring onward, both the number and diversity of visiting birds have increased notably. Photo credit: Sansha Municipal People's Government Website.



AUGUST 10

China Says Action Involving Philippine Nationals Was Part of Immigration Enforcement Campaign.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun responded to a question about whether recent enforcement action involving Philippine nationals was retaliation for the Philippines' detention of Chinese citizens. He said Chinese immigration authorities were conducting a nationwide campaign against foreigners who enter, reside or work in China illegally and that more than 100 Philippine nationals had been dealt with in accordance with the law for illegal employment or residence. Guo added that immigration officers carried out the operation professionally and in accordance with the law while protecting the rights of the foreign nationals involved.

AUGUST 11

Hainan Advances Plans for New Deep-Sea Research Institute.

Feng Fei, Secretary of the CPC Hainan Provincial Committee, visited the Sanya Yazhou Bay Science and Technology City to review the development of the deep-sea industry and meet with the preparatory team for the Deep-Sea Research Institute (Sanya), a joint initiative of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Hainan Province. He called for closer coordination between the ministry and the provincial government, accelerated establishment of the institute, and efforts to develop Sanya into a hub for deep-sea technological innovation and industry.

Chinese and English Editions of *What One Needs to Know About the South China Sea* (2026 Edition) Published.

The Chinese and English editions of *What One Needs to Know About the South China Sea* (2026 Edition), edited by Wu Shicun, have been published. Wu is Chairman of the Huayang Center for Maritime Cooperation and Ocean Governance, as well as the Founding President, Chairman of the Academic Committee and Senior Research Fellow at the National Institute for South China Sea Studies, China. Presented in a question-and-answer format, the book addresses 20 key questions from historical, geographical, legal, political, diplomatic and military perspectives. It examines the origins and evolution of the South China Sea issue, China's policies and positions, and the underlying dynamics shaping regional developments, offering international readers a concise and systematic guide to the issue.

What One Needs to Know About the South China Sea, published in both Chinese and English, is the first introductory book of its kind, in China or elsewhere, to explain specialized knowledge of the South China Sea in accessible language while maintaining an academic perspective. Written for general readers in China and abroad, it has been widely read and well received. Since its first publication in 2011, the book has been revised and reissued twice. Photo credit: Huayang Center for Maritime Cooperation and Ocean Governance.

AUGUST 12

China and Indonesia Complete Naval Navigation Exercise East of Taiwan Island.

The Chinese and Indonesian navies completed a naval navigation exercise in waters east of China's Taiwan Island. The exercise involved the Chinese naval vessel *Honghe* and the Indonesian Navy frigate *KRI I Gusti Ngurah Rai*. It included maritime communications, formation maneuvers and underway replenishment, highlighting the two countries' commitment to practical cooperation and the maintenance of regional peace and stability.

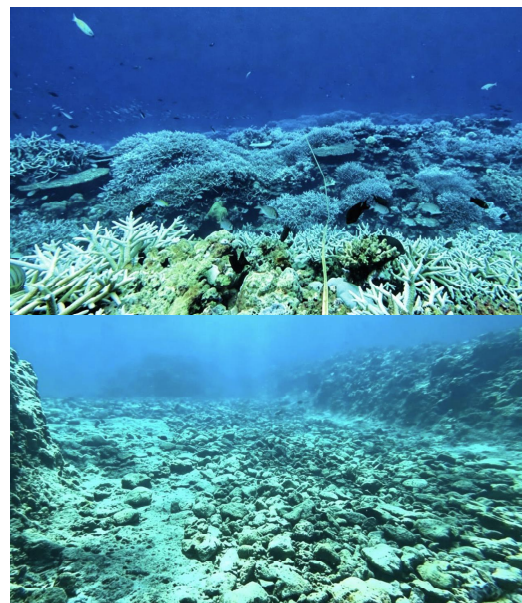
AUGUST 14

China Will Continue Rights-Protection and Law-Enforcement Operations in Waters Adjacent to Ren'ai Jiao.

China firmly opposed what it described as groundless accusations and smears by the Philippines and Australia following a joint statement issued a meeting between the two countries' defense ministers. China's Ministry of National Defense spokesperson Senior Colonel Chen Xi said the CCG had released relevant information and on-site evidence of the Philippine side's deliberate provocations and attack on Chinese personnel at Ren'ai Jiao. He added that China's necessary countermeasures were professional, restrained and beyond reproach. Chen reiterated that Ren'ai Jiao is part of China's Nansha Qundao, and said China would continue to conduct rights-protection and law-enforcement operations in adjacent waters to safeguard its territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests.

China Highlights Progress in Marine Ecological Conservation and Monitoring in the South China Sea.

The South China Sea Bureau of the Ministry of Natural Resources, together with relevant authorities from Guangdong, Guangxi, Hainan and Shenzhen, held an exchange event on marine ecological conservation in Haikou. At the event, the organizers released the *2025 South China Sea Marine Ecological Early Warning and Monitoring Bulletin* and the *2025 South China Sea Marine Ecological Conservation and Restoration Bulletin*. The monitoring bulletin provided the first comprehensive assessment of ecological conditions across the Xisha, Zhongsha and Nansha Qundao. The restoration bulletin showed that 66 marine ecological restoration projects were implemented across the region in 2025, with a total investment of nearly RMB 5 billion. By the end of 2025, approximately 2.66 million hectares had been placed within marine ecological conservation redlines, while marine protected areas covered about 7 million hectares across the South China Sea region.



The upper image shows the coral reef at Niu'e Jiao, while the lower image shows the coral reef at Ren'ai Jiao. The Bulletin indicates that the ecological conditions across the islands and reefs of the Nansha Qundao vary significantly but are generally good. However, the ecosystems at certain islands and reefs have been severely damaged and degraded by climate change and human activities carried out by foreign parties. Photo credit: Beijing Daily.

China Reaffirms Sovereignty over Huangyan Dao and Defends Immigration Enforcement.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun responded to a statement by a U.S. State Department spokesperson opposing China's establishment of a national nature reserve at Huangyan Dao. Guo said Huangyan Dao has always been Chinese territory and that the establishment and administration of the nature reserve constitute an exercise of China's sovereignty. He rejected the U.S. invocation of the "South China Sea Arbitral Award" to support the Philippines' position, describing the award as illegal and invalid. Guo also responded to criticism from Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. over China's handling of Philippine nationals suspected of violating Chinese laws. He said foreign nationals in China must comply with Chinese laws and regulations and that Chinese immigration authorities had carried out law enforcement in accordance with the law while protecting the legitimate rights and interests of those concerned. He added that the measures were not directed at any specific country.

Editor-in-Chief	Wu Shicun
Editors	Chen Wangwanyu Zhang Anqi Li Dongte
Reviewers	Xu Xiaodong Qin Kai



About Huayang Center

The Huayang Center for Maritime Cooperation and Ocean Governance (Huayang Center) is a comprehensive maritime policy research institution dedicated to promoting the peaceful use and sustainable development of the oceans. It engages in interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral research on maritime issues. Huayang Center is chaired by Wu Shicun, Founding President of the National Institute for South China Sea Studies (NISCSS) and Chairman of the Academic Committee of NISCSS. Headquartered in Sanya, Huayang Center also operates an office in Jiangdong New District in Haikou, with a liaison office in Beijing, and a branch-Huayang Center for Yellow Sea Studies-in Yancheng City, Jiangsu Province.

The Huayang Center is committed to the mission of advancing global ocean governance and sustainable development, contributing to China's goal of becoming a maritime power, and supporting Hainan's "ocean-oriented development" strategy. Focusing on the implementation of national maritime strategies, marine conservation and sustainable use, the maintenance of peace and stability in the South China Sea, and the promotion of international maritime cooperation and public diplomacy, Huayang Center is committed to the long-term goal of building a world-class think tank. It undertakes interdisciplinary research, policy advisory, professional training, international exchanges, and provides consulting services to maritime-related institutions and enterprises.

The Huayang Center's research team brings together leading experts and scholars from both China and abroad in the fields of international relations, international law, regional security, marine science, environmental protection, marine biology, and energy & resources. Led by Chairman and Chief Expert Dr. Wu Shicun, the Huayang Center's research team is distinguished by its youthfulness, international outlook, multidisciplinary expertise, and cross-sectoral approach.

The Huayang Center upholds the core values of "talent aggregation, results-oriented and innovation-driven development." Guided by the founding mission of building a "small team, big network-rooted in Hainan, serving the nation, engaging the world," the Huayang Center adheres to the philosophy of "attracting talent through meaningful work, advancing development through research, and overcoming challenges through focused efforts." Since its establishment, the Huayang Center has launched a series of signature initiatives-including the Huayang Exhibition, Huayang Briefing, Huayang Talk, Huayang Report, Huayang Team, and Huayang Culture-that have earned widespread recognition and acclaim from relevant decision-making bodies and peers in the field.

CONTACT US

Address: 2006-2007A, 2nd Floor, Hainan Hongbao
Investment Headquarters, No.6 Huanhai Road,
Jiangdong New Area, Haikou, Hainan, P.R. China
www.huayangmaritime.com
info@huayangocean.com
Tel: +86-0898-65969576

