

Chinese Spy Ship Yuan Wang 5

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In news– India is closely monitoring the movement of a Chinese ‘Yuan Wang 5’ “spy ship” that is on its way to Sri Lanka’s Hambantota port.

About the ship-

- Yuan Wang 5 **is a dual-use spy**, research and survey vessel, **employed for space and satellite tracking** and with specific usage in intercontinental **ballistic missile launches**.
- This vessel is **in control of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) under its Strategic Support Force(SSF) unit**. The SSF focuses on space, cyber, and electronic warfare.
- It is **a third-generation tracking ship of the Yuan Wang Series**, which came into service on September 29, 2007, **built at China’s Jiangnan Shipyard &** was designed by China’s 708 Research Institute.
- **It is a highly sophisticated missile range instrumentation ship** with top-of-the-line antennas and electronic equipment to support the launching and tracking of missiles and rockets.
- **They are used by the navies of China, France, India, Russia**, and the United States, mainly for military purposes.
- China has around seven of these tracking ships that are capable of operating throughout the Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian oceans. The ships supplement Beijing’s land-based tracking stations.
- **This 222-metre long and 25.2-metre wide vessel** has state-of-the-art tracking technology onboard for **transoceanic aerospace observation**.
- **Its last monitoring mission was the launch of China’s ‘Long March 5B’ rocket**. It was also recently involved in maritime monitoring of the launch of China’s Tiangong

space station's first lab module.

- According to the Belt & Road Initiative Sri Lanka (BRISL), 'Yuan Wang 5' will enter Hambantota port on August 11 for a week and will likely leave on August 17 after replenishment.

Why is India concerned about this development?

The 'Yuan Wang 5' is a powerful tracking vessel whose significant aerial reach – reportedly around 750 km – means that several ports in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh could be on China's radar. Reports have claimed that **several vital installations in South India could be under threat of being snooped upon.**

Hambantota port-

- The **second-largest Lankan port**, Hambantota sits on the route connecting Southeast Asia with Africa and West Asia.
- **For China, it is an important stop in its Belt and Road Initiative.**
- **Its development was largely funded by China**, and in 2017, Colombo handed over its majority stake to a Chinese firm after failing to repay the burgeoning debt.
- India and the US have repeatedly flagged concerns that Chinese control of this port could harm their interests in the Indian Ocean by becoming a hub for the PLA Navy.
- Hambantota's proximity to India has the potential of allowing the Chinese navy just the maritime flex aimed at India that it has been seeking for long.

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