

《英语新闻报道：中国启用南沙渚碧礁灯塔》

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Country is 'committed to providing more public products and services' to ensure safe navigation



The lighthouse on Zhubi Reef in the South China Sea is now in use. XING GUANGLI / XINHUA

Beijing rebuffed suspicion on Wednesday over the operation of a lighthouse on an island in the South China Sea, saying it is a public service that China is providing to the region.

"China has been committed to providing more public products and services to navigation in the South China Sea. It is beneficial to the trade of coastal countries in the region and even some countries outside the region," Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang told a regular news briefing.

The Ministry of Transport held a completion ceremony on Tuesday for construction of the lighthouse on Zhubi Reef, marking the start of the lighthouse's operation.

Construction of the 55-meter-high lighthouse, which has a lantern of 4.5 meters in diameter on top and rotating lights inside, began in October. The lighthouse is monitored via a remote control terminal.

The lighthouse emits white light in the nighttime, with a range of 22 nautical miles and a glow cycle of five seconds.

Zheng Heping, deputy head of the Maritime Safety Administration, said the automatic identification system and other equipment inside the lighthouse can provide efficient navigation services to ships, such as positioning reference, route guidance and navigation safety information.

To improve maritime emergency responses in the area, the Ministry of Transport started construction of large, multifunctional lighthouses on Huayang Reef, Chigua Reef and Zhubi Reef last year. The two other lighthouses are already in use.

"The Zhubi lighthouse will further enhance the capability to ensure maritime security in the South China Sea," Zheng said.

"The lighthouse is a very advanced one with multiple functions," said Zhang Xuegang, an expert on Southeast Asian studies at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations.

He said the lighthouse will provide information about hydrology and weather, including typhoon warnings, to passing vessels.

"It can also provide waterway information, such as which channels are busy," he added.

He suggested having rescue personnel live on the island.

Li Jinming, a professor of maritime policy and law at Xiamen University, said the lighthouses that China has built in the South China Sea are a testimony to its efforts to safeguard navigation freedom and security.

"The US, Japan and the Philippines have challenged China on that. And the glowing lighthouse is a silent answer."

Lighthouses are part of China's efforts to perform its responsibilities in maritime search and rescue, response to natural disasters and marine environmental protection, the Transport Ministry has said.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

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