

Taiwan seeks international scientists for new research ship



Taipei, Sept. 24 (CNA) Taiwan is scheduled to launch a new research vessel in late October to conduct marine research in the waters south of the country that might involve scientists from the Philippines and Vietnam to enhance its research capability and increase its international visibility.

The 2,629-ton ship named the Legend (傳), constructed in Vietnam by Triyards Marine Services, a Singapore shipbuilder, has the capacity to accommodate 19 crew members and 24 researchers. It can sail up to 30 days without refueling, according to National Applied Research Laboratories (NARLabs).

NARLabs will have discussions with local marine researchers in the coming days to determine topics to be researched during the ship's maiden voyage, including such possible options as underwater exploration and combustible ice exploration, said Wang Chau-chang (王超昌), director of the Taiwan Ocean Research Institute at NARLabs.

Noting that international cooperation is critical to marine research, as seen in the development of the field in the United States, Japan and South Korea, Wang said NARLabs has been exploring the possibility of inviting Philippine and

Vietnamese researchers to sail on board with local counterparts.

The ship was procured to strengthen Taiwan's oceanography research capabilities after the country's 2,700-ton research vessel the RV Ocean Researcher 5 sank in waters off Penghu in 2014.

NARLabs purchased the Legend at a cost of about NT\$870 million (US\$28.09 million). The ship, which was delivered in Januray, has a top speed of 12 knots and was inaugurated at Kaohsiung's Banana Pier in May.

"We have learnt lessons to prevent a repeat tragedy of the RV Ocean Researcher 5," Wang said.

For one thing, Wang said, unlike the single-hull RV Ocean Researcher 5, the double-hull structure used for the Legend enforces its ability to withstand collision damage.

The Legend has been equipped with standby safety vessels and life rafts on both sides of the ship that can accommodate four times the number of individuals the ship can hold, Wang added.

Meanwhile, the crew members who will participate in the Legend's missions have been selected through a rigorous screening process and have received training from the Taiwan Ocean Research Institute.

(By Chu Tse-wei and Shih Hsiu-chuan)

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