

# **MAKING WAVES**

**A MARITIME NEWS BRIEF COVERING:**

- 1. Maritime Security**
- 2. Maritime Forces**
- 3. Shipping Ports and Ocean Economy**
- 4. Marine Environment**
- 5. Geopolitics**

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# MARITIME SECURITY

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## INDIA-MALAYSIA JOINT FOCUS GROUP TO TACKLE NEW MARITIME SECURITY THREATS

India and Malaysia conducted the 13th Malaysia-India Defence Cooperation Committee (MIDCOM) at Kuala Lumpur. The meeting focused on strengthening defence cooperation, particularly in maritime security, through multilateral engagements and collaboration in the defence industry. India and Malaysia discussed the importance of establishing a joint focus group to deal with non-traditional maritime threats and strengthen coordination in cybersecurity as well as artificial intelligence. The two countries exchanged agreements on a strategic affairs working group and a Su-30 forum for sharing expertise and best practices in Su-30 maintenance. India reaffirmed its support for ASEAN centrality in the Indo-Pacific and highlighted opportunities for cooperation in Malaysia's defence modernisation initiative.

**Editorial comment:** India and Malaysia have reaffirmed their interest in deepening defence cooperation, with an emphasis on maritime security, multilateral engagement, and new technologies such as AI and cybersecurity. The establishment of a joint focus group on non-traditional security issues and a Su-30 forum indicates closer military cooperation. With Malaysia as the chair of ASEAN, India's support underscores the strategic value of their relationship in the Indo-Pacific.

**Source:** [Here](#) 17 February 2025

## EU EXTENDS RED SEA MARITIME SECURITY OPERATION THROUGH 2026, EXPANDS INTELLIGENCE SHARING

The European Union extended Operation ASPIDES in the Red Sea until 28 February 2026, committing over €17 million to safeguarding navigation amid ongoing regional tensions. Launched in February 2024 in response to Houthi attacks, ASPIDES operated in strategic maritime chokepoints such as the Bab al-Mandab and the Strait of Hormuz. By sharing intelligence with international organisations, the operation also monitored arms trafficking and shadow fleets. Although Houthi attacks had paused following updates on the Gaza ceasefire, security concerns continued to disrupt Suez Canal shipping.

**Editorial comment:** The EU's extension of Operation ASPIDES highlights the persistent security risks in the Red Sea, despite recent pauses in hostilities. By broadening its scope to include intelligence on arms trafficking and shadow fleets, the initiative strengthens maritime security and safeguards critical trade routes.

**Source:** [Here](#) 18 February 2025



## UNDERWATER SABOTAGE: A BALTIC SEA TIMELINE

A number of underwater cable and pipeline interruptions have occurred in the Baltic Sea region, leading to heightened NATO monitoring. Despite several investigations, no suspects have been found guilty. Authorities are holding ships connected to the damage in connection with recent occurrences, such as the alleged sabotage of communication cables between Sweden and Latvia and Finland and Germany in early 2025. Following damage to the Estlink 2 power cable and telephone cables, Finland apprehended an oil ship in December 2024. China let inspectors to examine the Yi Peng 3 bulk carrier earlier in 2024 after it was feared that Baltic communications cables had been sabotaged. Notably, the 2022 Nord Stream explosions are still unsolved, and the Newnew Polar Bear was held accountable for cutting the Balticconnector gas pipeline in 2023. Investigations point to a combination of unintentional and intentional acts, and the security of the Baltic Sea is still threatened by geopolitical conflicts.

**Editorial comment:** Due to several interruptions in underwater infrastructure since 2022, the Baltic Sea area is still on high alert. NATO is stepping its monitoring as investigations into damaged gas pipelines, electricity lines, and telecom cables continue. Some incidents are unintentional anchor hits, but others raise questions about possible sabotage and heighten tensions in the region's security.

**Source:** [Here](#) 21 February 2025

## TAIWAN DETAINS SHIP AFTER UNDERSEA CABLE DISCONNECTED

Taiwan's Coast Guard detained the *Hong Tai 58*, a Togo-registered cargo vessel crewed by Chinese nationals, after an undersea cable to the Penghu Islands was cut. The ship was anchored near the break, raising suspicions of "grey zone" harassment. Taiwan, which has faced similar disruptions before, is treating the incident as a national security matter. While communications were quickly rerouted, officials remain concerned about the rising frequency of such incidents.

**Editorial comment:** Taiwan detained a Chinese-crewed cargo ship near a severed undersea cable, citing possible grey-zone harassment. With rising incidents of cable disruptions, China treats the case as a national security concern, highlighting tensions over vital communication links.

**Source:** [Here](#) 23 February 2025

# MARITIME FORCES

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## MULTILATERAL NAVAL EXERCISE KOMODO GETS UNDERWAY

The fifth Multilateral Naval Exercise Komodo was held from 16 to 22 February in Bali, Indonesia, hosted by the Indonesian Navy. More than 30 vessels from over 15 nations, including India, the US, China, and Russia, participated in the non-combatant exercise titled *Maritime Partnership for Peace and Stability*. The exercise emphasised maritime cooperation and disaster relief and included

an officer exchange forum, bilateral naval conferences, and a maritime security symposium. Participating ships included India's INS Shardul and P-8I aircraft, Singapore's RSS Valour and RSS Fortitude, Australia's HMAS Hobart, and Vietnam's Ship 09.

**Editorial comment:** Exercise Komodo highlights Indonesia's role as a facilitator of maritime diplomacy. With participation from some of the world's largest navies, the exercise re-emphasises multilateral cooperation, maritime security, and disaster response—crucial in an era of heightened regional tensions.

**Source:** [Here](#) 17 February 2025

## USCG AND NAVY RESCUE CREW FROM IRANIAN SHIP SINKING IN PERSIAN GULF

A dramatic rescue unfolded in the Arabian Gulf when the US Coast Guard Cutter *Clarence Sutphin Jr* and *USS Devastator* saved seven crew members from the sinking cargo ship *Shayesteh*. The Iranian-owned, Qatari-flagged vessel had sent a mayday call before it went under due to severe listing. CENTCOM later confirmed that all five Iranian and two Indian seafarers were safe. The *Sutphin*, part of the US 5th Fleet, has been active in regional security, intercepting missile components and seizing narcotics earlier this year.

**Editorial comment:** The US Navy and Coast Guard rescued seven seafarers from the sinking Iranian-owned, Qatari-flagged cargo ship *Shayesteh* in the Arabian Gulf. The crew, including five Iranians and two Indians, was safely taken aboard USCGC *Clarence Sutphin Jr.*, which has played a key role in regional maritime security, including past interdictions of weapons and narcotics.

**Source:** [Here](#) 18 Feb 2025

## US-SPONSORED 30-NATION NAVAL EXERCISE CONCLUDES IN BAHRAIN

IMX 2025, led by Vice Adm George Wikoff, concluded in Bahrain on February 20, involving 5,000 personnel from 35+ nations in naval security, mine countermeasures, and disaster response. Directed by Commodore Rashid Mahmood Sheikh, the exercise integrated civilian coordination and advanced technologies.

**Editorial comment:** IMX 2025 concludes with multinational naval forces enhancing maritime security through advanced exercises in the Red Sea, Arabian Gulf, and Gulf of Aden. Led by NAVCENT, the drills focused on mine countermeasures, unmanned systems, and crisis response, reinforcing regional cooperation in complex maritime scenarios.

**Source:** [Here](#) 21 Feb 2025

## US COAST GUARD SHIP IN TASMAN SEA DID NOT INTERACT WITH CHINESE NAVY

A US Coast Guard ship, *Midgett*, sailed across the Tasman Sea as part of its maritime security cooperation with New Zealand and Australia, cognisant but not engaging with close-by Chinese naval vessels. China's live-fire exercises in the area made airlines divert flights and signaled its increasing naval presence. Analysts indicate that China is probing Australia, New Zealand, and the

US for their diplomatic reaction. Meanwhile, the US Coast Guard has boosted South Pacific patrols against unlicensed fishing, while China registers coast guard ships for fisheries patrols. The Midgett will then go to Papua New Guinea on an illegal fishing patrol.

**Editorial comment:** China's military exercises in the Tasman Sea portend increasing strategic assertiveness, challenging the commitment of Australia, New Zealand, and the US, as Beijing seeks not to confront the three countries openly, its behaviour underscores the importance of enhanced regional maritime cooperation in ensuring stability within the Indo-Pacific.

**Source:** [Here](#) 25 February 2025

## **TROPEX 2025: ENHANCING INDIA'S MARITIME POWER THROUGH THEATRE-LEVEL OPERATIONAL READINESS DRILLS**

TROPEX, the Indian Navy's biennial Theatre Level Operational Readiness Exercise, enhances combat readiness, joint operations, and maritime security. It integrates assets from the Army, Air Force, and Coast Guard to test warfighting capabilities across multiple domains, including anti-submarine, amphibious, and network-centric warfare. With growing regional threats and China's naval presence in the Indian Ocean, TROPEX strengthens India's blue-water capabilities, deterrence, and strategic partnerships. The exercise continues to evolve, incorporating AI, unmanned systems, cyber warfare, and precision-strike weapons, ensuring the Indian Navy remains agile and technologically advanced in an increasingly complex maritime security environment.

**Editorial comment:** TROPEX is a cornerstone of the Indian Navy's operational preparedness, ensuring seamless joint-force integration and strategic deterrence. As threats in the seas around India grow, TROPEX puts special emphasis on new technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and cyber warfare. This focus shows India's strong commitment to building a modern and quick-response navy. Improving the ability to operate in the deep ocean through TROPEX is essential for protecting the nation's interests and ensuring peace in the Indian Ocean region.

**Source:** [Here](#) 27 February 2025

## **SHIPPING, PORTS AND OCEAN ECONOMY**

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### **SUEZ CANAL CHAIRMAN POSITIVE ABOUT RETURNING BUSINESS**

According to Egypt's Suez Canal Authority chairman, Osama Rabie, 47 ships have returned to using the Suez Canal instead of the Cape of Good Hope route since early February. He downplayed fears of a permanent shift, stating that the Red Sea crisis hasn't created a lasting alternative to the canal. Houthi attacks have disrupted shipping, forcing vessels to take longer

routes and raising costs. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi estimated that the disruption could cost Egypt around \$7 billion in lost canal revenue this year.

**Editorial comment:** Suez Canal sees signs of recovery as 47 ships reroute from the Cape of Good Hope, signalling renewed confidence in the waterway. Despite Red Sea disruptions, Egyptian officials remain optimistic about regional stability and the canal's economic rebound.

**Source:** [Here](#) 23 February 2025

## DOUBLING INDIAN CRUISE PASSENGER TRAFFIC BY 2029

Launched on September 30, 2024, the Cruise Bharat Mission (CBM) aims to double the cruise passenger traffic to 2.5 million by 2029 through policy reforms, infrastructure development, and ease of doing business. However, there are daunting challenges, including poor port infrastructure, high tariffs, and concerns over pollution, that could derail the plan. To move forward, it is essential to ease regulations, develop modern cruise terminals, and integrate local communities through the provision of services and products. If these challenges are addressed with policies and reforms in place, India could become the world's best cruise destination.

**Editorial comment:** With a goal of reaching 2.5 million passengers by 2029, the Cruise Bharat Mission provides a hopeful roadmap for the growth of cruise tourism in India. However, overcoming infrastructure gaps, regulatory obstacles, and pollution concerns is essential to success; streamlined regulations, better port infrastructure, and environmentally friendly practices are urgently needed. With deliberate reforms and collaboration among stakeholders, India can become a world-class cruise hub, fostering economic development in balance with the environment.

**Source:** [Here](#) 26 February 2025

## US PLAN TO PENALISE CHINESE SHIPS COULD HIT INDIAN TRADE

The proposed US port fees on Chinese ships and China-built vessels could significantly impact Indian trade, which depends on foreign carriers for global cargo transport. With fees exceeding \$1 million per port call, the move aims to curb China's maritime dominance but may drive up shipping costs and reroute traffic through Canada and Mexico. Given that China accounted for over half of 2024's global ship deliveries, the measure risks disrupting global trade flows while challenging China's growing shipbuilding market share.

**Editorial comment:** The USTR's proposal to impose hefty port fees on Chinese-built and Chinese-owned ships could disrupt Indian trade, which relies heavily on foreign vessels. If implemented, it may raise shipping costs and force carriers to reroute via Canada and Mexico, straining capacity. The move is part of broader US efforts to counter China's dominance in shipbuilding and maritime logistics, but its ripple effects on global trade remain uncertain.

**Source:** [Here](#) 27 February 2025

## FIRST PORT DECARBONISATION PILOT PROJECT LED BY V O CHIDAMBARANAR PORT

V O Chidambaranar Port Trust is leading India's maritime sustainability efforts with the country's first pilot-scale port decarbonisation project. Following a thorough evaluation of alternative fuels, the port has secured approval to deploy green methanol for vessel propulsion, port operations, and bunkering. Endorsed by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, the project now moves to the implementation phase, making V O Chidambaranar Port the first in India to establish green methanol bunkering infrastructure.

**Editorial comment:** V O Chidambaranar Port is leading India's first pilot project for decarbonisation of ports, with green methanol as a green fuel. With approvals from major ministries, the port will set up the nation's first green methanol bunkering infrastructure, a significant milestone in maritime sustainability.

**Source:** [Here](#) 27 February 2025

## JV BETWEEN MANDОВI DRYDOCKS AND RIPLEY GROUP WILL BUILD A SHIPYARD AT KOLKATA PORT

Mandovi Drydocks and Ripley Stevedoring are setting up a shipbuilding and repair facility at Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, leasing 121 acres for 30 years with an initial ₹200 crore investment. The venture will start with 6,000-8,000-ton ships, later scaling up to 25,000 tons, with a total investment of ₹2,000 crore. This aligns with India's maritime expansion, following Cochin Shipyard's repair facility and Deendayal Port's shipbuilding cluster plans.

**Editorial comment:** Mandovi Drydocks and Ripley Group JV's decision to establish a shipyard at Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port aligns with India's drive for private investment in shipbuilding, and indicates increasing private-sector interest in maritime infrastructure. But execution and long-term sustainability will remain a challenge.

**Source:** [Here](#) 28 February 2025

# MARINE ENVIRONMENT

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## ARCTIC MARINE MAMMALS SUFFER INCREASED MORTALITY, DECREASED REPRODUCTIVE RATE DUE TO OCEANIC HEAT WAVES: STUDY

Arctic and subarctic marine heatwaves (MHWs) have both immediate and long-term impacts on marine mammals, leading to increased mortality, disease, and lower reproductive rates. For instance, Narwhals and Bowhead whales struggle with heat dispersal, while toxic algae blooms and food web disruptions pose additional threats. Past MHWs have already caused high mortality among seals and whales. With the Arctic Ocean projected to become a future hotspot for MHWs,



the study raises serious concerns about the survival of marine species in these rapidly warming waters.

**Editorial comment:** Marine mammals are experiencing higher mortality, decreased rates of reproduction, and greater susceptibility to illness as a result of marine heatwaves (MHWs) in the Subarctic and Arctic oceans. Certain species will migrate their range in order to adapt, but because Arctic-native species rely on a cold, stable habitat, they are in grave danger. The findings highlight how urgently climate resilience measures are needed to protect these delicate ecosystems.

**Source:** [Here](#) 20 February 2025

## EU'S NEW CLEAN INDUSTRY DEAL INCLUDES PUSH FOR ALTERNATIVE FUELS

The European Commission launched the Clean Industry Deal to drive decarbonisation, simplify rules, and increase clean technology. The strategy has €100 billion for clean manufacturing and an Industrial Decarbonisation Bank, with updated rules set to draw in €50 billion of investment. The shipping industry was pleased to see the emphasis on alternative fuels and energy efficiency. Sectoral action plans for automotive, steel, and metals will be released in the next few months.

**Editorial comment:** The Clean Industry Deal from the European Commission seeks to boost industry competitiveness and hasten decarbonization. It aims to lower energy prices and regulatory barriers by concentrating on clean technology and energy-intensive industries with €100 billion in financing. The plan has the support of the marine industry, which emphasizes its contribution to port development.

**Source:** [Here](#) 27 February 2025

## AN ALARMING MARINE LITTER CRISIS IS THREATENING LAKSHADWEEP'S COASTAL AND CORAL ECOSYSTEMS

Marine litter, particularly plastic, poses threat to the coral atolls of Lakshadweep. A study conducted on Kavaratti Island found 32,710 items of litter. The litter was composed of 63.7% plastic, with public littering as the primary source. The Pollution Load Index (PLI) of the lagoon reef was found to be very high, at 53.4, endangering the coral. Almost 6% of the coral is in direct contact with the litter, which causes disease, tissue loss and bleaching. Measures such as banning single-use plastics, improving waste management, and involving local communities in waste management are urgently needed.

**Editorial comment:** Lakshadweep's coral atolls face an escalating threat from marine litter, with plastic waste dominating pollution levels. The alarming Pollution Load Index and direct coral-litter interaction underscore the urgent need for decisive action. Without strict regulations on plastic use and improved waste management, the region's fragile marine ecosystem risks irreversible damage. Sustainable policies and community engagement are essential to safeguarding these biodiversity hotspots before the crisis deepens.

**Source:** [Here](#) 27 February 2025

## DEEP-SEA REGION OF GULF OF MANNAR INCLUDED IN HYDROCARBON EXPLORATION TENDER

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has added 9,990.96 sq km of Tamil Nadu's Gulf of Mannar and four deep-sea blocks off the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to its latest hydrocarbon exploration auction. Seismic surveys, chemical pollution, and habitat destruction in these vulnerable ecosystems pose severe ecological threats to marine life and local fisheries, warn experts.

**Editorial comment:** The addition of Tamil Nadu's Gulf of Mannar and the Andaman waters to India's recent hydrocarbon exploration offers has raised environmental concerns. While the government is striving to increase energy resources, experts alert of threats to marine biodiversity and local fishing communities. The issue again reveals the classical conflict between economic interests and ecological conservation.

**Source:** [Here](#) 28 February 2025

## GEOPOLITICS

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### WHY COOK ISLANDS' DEAL WITH CHINA FOR CLOSER RELATIONS MATTERS IN THE GEOPOLITICS OF THE PACIFIC

The Cook Islands has signed an agreement to deepen ties with China, covering trade, investment, infrastructure, and ocean science. Prime Minister Mark Brown assured that this partnership complements, rather than replaces, existing relationships with New Zealand and other allies. However, the move raises geopolitical concerns as China expands its influence in the Pacific, challenging the US, Australia, and New Zealand. The agreement could also pave the way for Chinese involvement in deep-sea mining and maritime security, potentially strengthening Beijing's position in a region of strategic importance.

**Editorial comment:** The Cook Islands' deepening engagement with China signals a shift in the Pacific's geopolitical landscape, raising concerns among Western allies. While framed as an economic and scientific partnership, the agreement strengthens Beijing's influence in a region vital for maritime security and resource competition. The inclusion of deep-sea mining and infrastructure cooperation aligns with China's broader strategic ambitions, making this partnership a key development to watch in the evolving Indo-Pacific power balance.

**Source:** [Here](#) 16 February 2025

## CHINA CONDEMNS SAILING OF CANADIAN WARSHIP IN TAIWAN STRAIT

China's military strongly criticised Canada after its warship, *Ottawa*, sailed through the Taiwan Strait. This incident followed a similar action by the US Navy, prompting China to accuse Canada of causing disturbances and threatening regional peace and stability. Meanwhile, Taiwan, which also tracked the Canadian ship, welcomed Canada's move as support for the stance that the Taiwan Strait should be considered international waters. Simultaneously, Taiwan reported increased Chinese military activity near the island, detecting several Chinese aircraft and naval vessels operating close to its territory.

**Editorial comment:** Canada's transit through the Taiwan Strait asserts navigation rights amid China's territorial claims. With increasing regional military activity, such moves underscore strategic tensions, balancing deterrence while risking further escalation in the Indo-Pacific.

**Source:** [Here](#) 16 February 2025

## CHINESE DRILLS UPSET AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand reported that the Chinese navy conducted a live-fire drill near its waters on 17 February, following a similar exercise that disrupted flights. The Australian government criticised China, stating that no advance notice was given. This lack of warning raised concerns about the safety of flights. China, on the other hand, defended its actions by saying that the exercises were in line with international law and accused Australia of overreacting. These military drills are taking place during a time of increased tensions in the region. Both Australia and New Zealand are paying close attention to China's expanding naval activity in their nearby waters.

**Editorial comment:** China's live-fire naval exercises near Australia and New Zealand have raised concerns over inadequate advance notice, forcing airlines to reroute flights. While both New Zealand and Australia monitored the drills, Australian officials criticised Beijing's short-notice warnings as a risk to aviation safety. China, in response, dismissed the concerns as exaggerated, insisting that all procedures followed international law.

**Source:** [Here](#) 23 February 2025

## INDIA, EU WORKING ON SECURITY AND DEFENCE PARTNERSHIP: VON DER LEYEN

India and the EU are forming a security and defense collaboration to address concerns including cyberattacks, maritime security issues, and cross-border terrorism. This expands on cooperative naval exercises and strengthening defence relations, with India looking at joining EU defence initiatives. An EU liaison officer would be stationed at India's Information Fusion center (IFC-IOR), defence discussions will be upgraded, and homeland security cooperation will be strengthened. Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, emphasized the need for stronger deterrents and closer collaboration with India while highlighting the global consequences of wars such as the one between Russia and Ukraine.

**Editorial comment:** India's increasing international defense participation is signaled by the India-EU security collaboration, which provides access to European technologies and a variety of military purchase options. However, there are still issues, such as India's need to balance its strategic autonomy and the EU's Eurocentric orientation. Although collaboration on maritime security is encouraging, deliberate discussion is needed to establish stronger defense links. The key to success is converting rhetoric into practical action.

**Source:** [Here](#) 28 February 2025