

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

STRAIT OF HORMUZ CRISIS AVERTED FOR NOW

Iran temporarily closed parts of the Strait of Hormuz during Revolutionary Guard drills dubbed “Smart Control of the Strait,” coinciding with indirect US–Iran nuclear talks in Geneva. Carrying nearly 20% of global oil trade, the chokepoint experienced minor delays but no major disruptions, with Iranian media confirming a few hours’ partial shutdown for “safety measures” amid US carrier deployments, including USS *Gerald R. Ford* and USS *Abraham Lincoln*. Tehran appeared to signal strategic leverage as Foreign Minister Araghchi announced consensus on certain “guiding principles,” while Supreme Leader Khamenei cautioned against potential retaliatory strikes. The situation stabilised swiftly as the strait reopened without escalation.

Source: [Here](#), 02 February 2026

MARITIME SECURITY INCREASES IN MULTIPLE REGIONS IN JANUARY 2026

The Indian Navy’s IFC-IOR recorded 285 maritime incidents in January 2026, a 3 per cent rise from December’s 278. Maritime mishaps (125 cases), including MEDEVACs, mechanical failures, and sinkings, remained steady. Piracy and armed robbery doubled to 25 incidents, driven by petty thefts in Southeast Asia and kidnappings in the Gulf of Guinea (Nigeria and Gabon). IUU fishing increased to 44 cases, with 11,520 kg of catch seized, largely involving Malaysia. Irregular human migration rose to 20 events—280 migrants from Yemen and 458 near Mayotte—reflecting sustained smuggling pressures amid Red Sea disruptions and Northern Sea Route-related sanctions challenges.

Source: [Here](#), 03 February 2026

THE NORTHERN SEA ROUTE: SHORTER ON PAPER, HARDER IN PRACTICE

The Northern Sea Route (NSR) promises shorter Europe-Asia transits—saving 7-10 days versus Suez—yet 2025 cargo volumes fell 2.3% to 37 million tons due to seasonal ice limits, high icebreaker fees, sparse infrastructure, and sanctions complicating shadow fleet reliance. Sanctioned vessels (now ~33% of traffic) often lack ice-class certification, proper insurance, or maintenance, elevating accident risks in the fragile Arctic ecosystem amid reduced Russian data transparency. While Russia-China pilots test year-round viability, NSR suits bulk carriers over liners; geopolitical risks and elevated premiums deter mainstream adoption, preserving Suez/Cape dominance for India’s energy SLOCs.

Source: [Here](#), 04 February 2026

MARITIME SECURITY IN THE NORTHERN BLACK SEA: OPERATIONAL REALITIES AND EMERGING RISKS

The northern Black Sea remains a high-risk zone in 2026 due to ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict dynamics, with merchant vessels facing kinetic threats like drone strikes, missile attacks, and drifting mines. Ukrainian strikes target Russian shadow fleet tankers (e.g., VIRAT, KAIROS) and Novorossiysk port, while Russian actions hit Odesa/Chornomorsk infrastructure, disrupting grain and oil exports amid intensified early-2026 incidents. GNSS jamming/spoofing compounds navigational hazards, prompting P&I clubs to stress BMP-MS compliance, redundant positioning, and war risk scrutiny for Ukrainian corridor transits under IMO Circular 4748.

Source: [Here](#), 09 February 2026

RED SEA AND GULF OF ADEN: SECURITY THREAT TO SHIPPING

Houthi forces continue targeting merchant vessels in the Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb Strait, and Gulf of Aden with UAVs, USVs, missiles, and small boat attacks, sinking ships and killing seafarers as recently as July 2025. Vessels linked to Israel, the US, or the UK face heightened risks, prompting AIS deactivation, armed guards, evasive routing, and BMP5 compliance amid over 190 attacks since late 2023. Piracy risks rise in the adjacent Arabian Sea/Indian Ocean, forcing Cape detours that strain India's 80% oil-import SLOCs and elevate insurance/premium costs.

Source: [Here](#), 11 February 2026

MARITIME FORCES

'SOURCE OF PRIDE': PRESIDENT MURMU WISHES INDIAN COAST GUARD ON 50TH RAISING DAY

President Droupadi Murmu hailed the Indian Coast Guard as a "source of pride" on its 50th Raising Day celebrated 1 February 2026, marking five decades since formal establishment in 1977 from seven ships to 206 surface platforms and 77 aircraft safeguarding India's 11,098 km coastline and EEZ. Under the theme "Surakshit Tat, Samridh Bharat" (Secure Coasts, Prosperous India), the golden jubilee highlights ICG's role in maritime security, SAR operations saving 11,806 lives, and narcotics seizures worth ₹54,413 crore amid 285 incidents in Jan 2026. Celebrations in Visakhapatnam signal expansion to 200 ships/100 aircraft by 2030, bolstering SAGAR post-Dornier HAL deal.

Source: [Here](#), 02 February 2026

IONS 2026 CONCLAVE TO STRENGTHEN MARITIME SECURITY AND REGIONAL COOPERATION

The IONS 2026 Conclave of Chiefs, hosted by the Indian Navy on 20 February in Visakhapatnam as part of Maritime Convergence 2026 (with IFR and *MILAN*), convenes naval leaders from 25 member states and 9 observers to advance dialogue on maritime security, HADR, capacity-building, and interoperability. India assumes IONS Chairmanship (2026-28) from Thailand, reinforcing its *MAHASAGAR* vision amid Red Sea disruptions, piracy resurgence, and hybrid threats. This non-binding forum fosters trust and collective stewardship across the strategically vital Indian Ocean Region.

Source: [Here](#), 09 February 2026

INDIAN NAVY ASSUMES FIRST-EVER COMMAND OF COMBINED TASK FORCE (CTF) 154

The Indian Navy has assumed command of Combined Task Force (CTF) 154—a multinational training and capacity-building unit under the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)—marking its first-ever leadership of a CMF operational task force. Commodore Milind M Mokashi, Shaurya Chakra, took charge from Italy's Commodore Andrea Bielli during an 11 February 2026 ceremony at CMF HQ in Manama, Bahrain, presided by US VAdm Curt Renshaw and India's DCNS VAdm Tarun Sobti. Focused on maritime awareness, interdiction, law, rescue, and leadership across five core areas, CTF 154 (est. May 2023) enhances regional readiness among CMF's 47 nations, complementing CTF 150/151/152/153 amid Red Sea/Indian Ocean flux.

Source: [Here](#), 12 February 2026

MOD INKS DEAL WITH HAL FOR 8 DORNIER AIRCRAFT AT COST OF ₹2,312 CRORE

India's Ministry of Defence signed a ₹2,312 crore contract with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for 8 Dornier-228 aircraft, enhancing the Indian Coast Guard's maritime reconnaissance over the EEZ. Equipped with maritime patrol radar, EO/IR sensors, and mission systems, these STOL platforms enable surveillance, SAR, pollution monitoring, and targeting support from forward bases like the Andamans. This *Aatmanirbhar* deal strengthens MDA amid Red Sea threats and Indo-Pacific SLOC vulnerabilities, complementing recent trilateral exercises and Seychelles defence ties.

Source: [Here](#), 12 February 2026

INDIA, JAPAN, INDONESIA CONDUCT TRILATERAL NAVAL EXERCISE IN ANDAMAN SEA

India, Japan, and Indonesia conducted a trilateral naval exercise in the Andaman Sea on 13 February 2026, enhancing joint operational readiness, interoperability, and maritime cooperation for regional stability. Ships from all three navies participated in manoeuvres focusing on tactical

coordination amid Indo-Pacific challenges like Malacca Strait security and China's assertiveness. Timed with India's recent assumption of CMF's CTF-154 command, the drills reinforce MAHASAGAR through trusted maritime partnerships, ensuring secure sea lanes critical for 80% of India's trade.

Source: [Here](#), 14 February 2026

SHIPPING, PORTS AND OCEAN ECONOMY

BUDGET 2026: ₹1,000 CR FOR MARITIME DEVT FUND AS PORTS MINISTRY GETS A HIGHER ₹5164.80 CR

The Union Budget 2026 allocates ₹5,164.80 crore to the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways—a 48 per cent increase over FY26's ₹3,470 crore—emphasising port modernisation, shipbuilding, and inland waterways. ₹1,000 crore has been earmarked to seed the Maritime Development Fund (₹25,000 crore corpus) to support long-term financing for ports and shipyards, while the Shipbuilding Financial Assistance Scheme has been extended to 2036 with an outlay of ₹24,736 crore. Additional measures include 20 new National Waterways, coastal cargo promotion targeting a 12 per cent modal share by 2047, seaplane VGF, and dedicated freight corridors, strengthening SAGAR resilience amid Red Sea disruptions.

Source: [Here](#), 01 February 2026

CENTRE PUSHES MARITIME GROWTH WITH BHARAT CONTAINER SHIPPING LINE, PORT EXPANSION FUNDING

India has operationalised the *Bharat* Container Shipping Line (BCSL) through an MoU between SCI, CONCOR, and major ports, alongside ₹15,000 crore earmarked for port expansion under *Sagarmala* and PM *Gati Shakti*. Phase I envisages the procurement of 15 Indian-built container vessels in FY27, scaling up to 51 ships over five years to capture domestic EXIM traffic and insulate exporters from global freight volatility. Integrated with rail–port logistics networks, BCSL aims to reduce dependence on foreign carriers (currently holding 95 per cent market share), promote coastal shipping, and strengthen *SAGAR*-driven supply chain resilience amid Red Sea and NSR disruptions.

Source: [Here](#), 06 February 2026

RECORD-BREAKING YEAR FOR GLOBAL CONTAINER VOLUMES IN 2025

Global container throughput reached a record 192.9 million TEUs in 2025, a 4.7 per cent increase over 2024's 184.3 million, despite Red Sea disruptions necessitating Cape rerouting. Eight months exceeded 16 million TEUs, with December peaking at 16.97 million. Growth was driven by a 7 million TEU surge in Far East exports, boosting Intra-Asia trade (up 5 per cent, the largest lane), alongside import growth in Europe (+9 per cent), South and Central America (+10 per cent), and the Indian Subcontinent/Middle East (+9 per cent), while North America declined (-2 per cent). Freight rates fell 19.8 per cent amid excess capacity, intensifying competitive pressures on India's EXIM trade.

Source: [Here](#), 11 February 2026

IMO LAUNCHES GLOBAL CAMPAIGN TO PUT MARITIME "POLICY INTO PRACTICE"

IMO launched the two-year "From Policy to Practice: Powering Maritime Excellence" campaign, aligning with World Maritime Day 2026-27 themes, to bridge regulatory gaps ensuring safety, training, and decarbonisation standards apply globally in ports and operations. Nine pillars target capacity building for SIDS/LDCs, GHG readiness, fraudulent flags, audits, cyber resilience, and ocean protection beyond emissions (plastics, noise, invasives) via technical aid and events. Amid Red Sea/NSR risks and India's maritime surge (BCSL, MDF ₹1,000cr), this drives SAGAR enforcement consistency, seafarer welfare, and enforcement amid 285 Jan incidents.

Source: [Here](#), 12 February 2026

MAERSK ANNOUNCES PSS ON ASIA–SOUTH ASIA TRADE LANE

Maersk has announced a Peak Season Surcharge (PSS) on Asia–South Asia trade lanes effective 25 February 2026, covering shipments from Far East Asia (China, Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia) to Indian ports (JNPT, Pipavav, Mundra, Kattupalli, and Visakhapatnam), as well as Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Pakistan. Citing surging volumes, equipment shortages, and peak seasonal demand, the surcharge seeks to preserve capacity amid Red Sea rerouting pressures, tightening regional vessel space. The move raises freight costs for India's EXIM trade—90 per cent containerised—highlighting continued dependence on foreign carriers despite BCSL rollout and expanded port investments under SAGAR.

Source: [Here](#), 13 February 2026

INDIA–JAPAN COLLABORATION MARKS KEY MILESTONE AS WDFC NEARS FULL COMMISSIONING

India-Japan collaboration reached a milestone with the joint inspection of the *Vaitarna*-JNPT section of the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC) by Japanese delegates and DFCCIL officials, underscoring JICA-backed funding for this 1,506 km infrastructure. Track-laying completed on the critical 102 km last-mile link to India's busiest container port, pending signalling and OHE works for March 2026 commissioning—delayed from December 2025. Full WDFC activation will boost daily freight trains to 440, slashing transit times, decongesting networks, and enhancing JNPT-hinterland connectivity amid BCSL rollout and record 192.9M TEU global volumes.

Source: [Here](#), 13 February 2026

MARINE ENVIRONMENT

EVEN REMOTE PACIFIC FISH ARE FULL OF MICROPLASTICS

A landmark study across Fiji, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu reveals microplastics in 32.7% of 878 coastal fish from 138 species, averaging 0.76 particles per individual, with Fiji hit hardest at 74.5% prevalence. Reef-associated invertivores like *Lethrinus harak* and bottom-feeders show highest exposure (up to 80%), driven by fibre-dominated pollution linked to benthic habitats and feeding traits. This bioaccumulation threatens Pacific Island food security, amplifying calls for a Global Plastics Treaty as IMO's "Policy to Practice" campaign targets ocean plastics alongside coral bleaching losses in heat-stressed Indian Ocean reefs.

Source: [Here](#), 03 February 2026

SCIENTISTS WARN CLIMATE MODELS ARE MISSING A KEY OCEAN PLAYER

Climate models underestimate ocean carbon sequestration by underrepresenting calcifying plankton—coccolithophores, foraminifers, and pteropods—that form CaCO_3 shells, driving the biological carbon pump. These microbes facilitate "shallow dissolution" in upper waters via predation and respiration, altering ocean chemistry yet omitted from CMIP6 projections, risking inaccurate forecasts of acidification, heat uptake, and long-term storage. Amid coral bleaching (84% reefs hit) and microplastics in Pacific fish, refining plankton dynamics sharpens SAGAR resilience predictions for Indian Ocean SLOCs facing compounded climate-marine threats.

Source: [Here](#), 08 February 2026

VIZAG ACTIVIST WARNS OF HUGE MARINE LOSS FOR MINOR CORPORATE GAINS

An environmental activist in Visakhapatnam warns that rapid profit-driven projects—port expansions, industrial zones—sacrifice lakhs of crores in marine wealth for marginal corporate gains, echoing chronic pollution threats. Decades of industrial effluents, hot water discharges (up to 100°C), oil spills, and sewage have depleted dissolved oxygen (4.48 mg/L in polluted zones vs. 5.61 mg/L baseline), silting spawning grounds, and crashing phytoplankton essential to Bay of Bengal food chains. As BCSL/port upgrades accelerate amid Budget 2026's ₹5,165cr infusion, activists demand EIA safeguards to protect fisheries, biodiversity, and livelihoods from further habitat loss compounding coral bleaching and microplastic crises.

Source: [Here](#), 09 February 2026

AN ANTARCTIC ECOSYSTEM VALUE INDEX TO QUANTIFY ECOLOGICAL VALUE ACROSS TROPHIC LEVELS AND OVER TIME

Researchers introduced the Antarctic Ecosystem Value (AEV) Index in *Nature Communications*, integrating phytoplankton, krill, fish, and penguin data across trophic levels to quantify marine ecological hotspots around Antarctica. Coastal polynyas—persistent open-water areas amid sea ice—show 31-72% higher Index values, confirming their role as critical foraging grounds for ice-dependent species facing rapid Southern Ocean changes. Earth system model projections indicate high-value polynya habitats remain viable through 2100, though penguins face habitat loss; gaps persist in East Antarctica/Amundsen Sea MPAs needing expansion amid fishery pressures.

Source: [Here](#), 11 February 2026

THE WORST CORAL BLEACHING EVENT EVER RECORDED DAMAGED OVER 50% OF REEFS

The 2023–2025 global coral bleaching event, confirmed as the worst on record, impacted ~84% of the world's reefs across 83+ countries/territories through extreme marine heatwaves, with over 50% suffering significant damage or mortality. This fourth mass event—surpassing 2014–17's 68% reach—stressed systems like the Great Barrier Reef (fifth bleaching since 2016), Florida, Caribbean, Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Indian Ocean reefs amid record ocean heat. Heightened frequency erodes resilience, amplifying disease vulnerability and threatening fisheries, tourism, and coastal protection for 500M+ people; Indian Ocean stakeholders face SLOC-adjacent biodiversity losses compounding SAGAR maritime security imperatives.

Source: [Here](#), 12 February 2026

GEOPOLITICS

MOVING THE AUSTRALIA-INDIA MARITIME PARTNERSHIP FORWARD THROUGH COAST GUARD COOPERATION

Australia and India are advancing their maritime partnership through enhanced coast guard collaboration, building on the 2025 Defence Ministers' Dialogue and Joint Maritime Security Collaboration Roadmap. Formalising Indian Coast Guard-Australian Maritime Border Command ties targets non-traditional threats like piracy, IUU fishing, and cyber risks in the Indian Ocean, complementing naval exercises. Coordinated capacity building for South Asian partners, joint training, and marine science centres address China's influence while securing shared SLOCs critical for 80% of India's trade amid Red Sea/NSR disruptions.

Source: [Here](#), 02 February 2026

INDIA-SEYCHELLES AT 50: PRESIDENT HARMINIE'S DELHI VISIT OPENS AVENUES FOR STRATEGIC CONVERGENCE, MARITIME SECURITY

Seychelles President Dr Patrick Herminie visited India (5-10 February 2026), marking 50 years of diplomatic relations, holding summit talks with PM Modi and President Murmu that unveiled the India-Seychelles Joint Vision (SESEL) for sustainability, economic growth, and security. A special economic package targets health, infrastructure, education, and defence capacity-building under MAHASAGAR, reinforcing maritime cooperation in the Western Indian Ocean. This strategic convergence counters China's regional inroads, secures sea lanes, and elevates Seychelles as a key partner in India's net security provider role amid Indo-Pacific flux.

Source: [Here](#), 06 February 2026

WORLD DEFENCE SHOW 2026: GLOBAL DEFENCE FIRMS GATHER IN SAUDI ARABIA

World Defence Show (WDS) 2026, held 8-12 February in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, convenes over 925 exhibitors from 80 countries across 273,000 sqm, showcasing innovations in air, land, sea, space, and security domains. New features like the **Future Defense Lab** highlight AI, unmanned systems, quantum tech, and a dedicated Naval Zone, aligning with Saudi Vision 2030's 50% localization push amid SAR 26 billion deals from 2024. The event fosters global partnerships, talent via **Defensethon**, and maritime defence advancements critical for Indian Ocean stakeholders tracking Red Sea disruptions and Indo-Pacific SLOC security.

Source: [Here](#), 13 February 2026

JAISHANKAR MEETS G7 MINISTERS AT MUNICH, REITERATES INDIA'S PUSH FOR UNSC REFORM

At the Munich Security Conference (13-15 Feb 2026), EAM S Jaishankar met G7 Foreign Ministers, reiterating India's backing for UN@80 reforms—especially UNSC expansion—to match multipolar realities and enhance global governance. He highlighted India's maritime credentials: safeguarding SLOCs, first-responder roles (e.g., Yemen, Mozambique ops), port security upgrades, and submarine cable resilience amid Red Sea threats. Discussions revealed G7 convergences on trade (post-EU FTA), defence, and Indo-Pacific stability, while a G4 huddle advanced reformed multilateralism.

Source: [Here](#), 14 February 2026

ISRAEL-INDIA-UAE-ETHIOPIA: A NEW RED SEA AXIS?

Israel's recognition of Somaliland on 26 December 2025 marks the consolidation of a strategic Israel–India–UAE–Ethiopia alignment aimed at securing the Gulf of Aden and Bab al-Mandeb amid persistent Houthi threats and Red Sea disruptions. Berbera port provides Addis Ababa a viable alternative to Chinese-influenced Djibouti, while engagement under Prime Minister Narendra Modi strengthens efforts to counter BRI expansion. The emerging alignment advances IMEC connectivity, maritime security coordination, and technology integration, likely eliciting calibrated responses from China, Turkey, and Iran across the western Indian Ocean.

Source: [Here](#), 14 February 2026