

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

SUSPECTED PIRATES ATTACK CHINESE FISHING VESSEL OFF SOMALI COAST

Suspected Somali pirates attacked the Chinese-flagged fishing vessel *Liao Dong Yu 578* off the Puntland coast near Bandarbeyla on 1 January 2026, marking the first confirmed hijacking in the region since 2018 and signalling a potential resurgence of piracy. The vessel, previously ransomed in November 2024 following illegal fishing allegations, was boarded by armed assailants seeking ransom from its 15–20 crew. The Puntland Maritime Police Force launched a pursuit with local support. The incident was verified by EU NAVFOR and MSC-HOA, heightening concerns over Indian Ocean shipping security amid depleted fish stocks and foreign fleet pressures.

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

RISING PIRACY THREAT IN ASIAN WATERS AMID GLOBAL ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY

Piracy and armed robbery have surged in Asian waters amid the 2025–26 economic uncertainty. ReCAAP recorded 132 incidents across Asia—the highest since 2007—with 95 cases in Southeast Asia by mid-year, an 83 per cent year-on-year increase. The Malacca-Singapore Straits have emerged as hotspots, marked by opportunistic boardings targeting anchored bulk carriers. Contributing factors include depleted fish stocks, post-COVID economic stress in Indonesia's Riau Islands, and organised criminal coordination. Globally, 137 incidents were reported, 91 per cent successful, raising insurance and rerouting costs along critical trade lanes. Enhanced joint patrols and vessel vigilance are urgently required.

Source: [Here](#), 07 January 2026

MUDDYWATER LAUNCHES RUSTYWATER RAT VIA SPEAR-PHISHING ACROSS MIDDLE EAST SECTORS

The Iranian advanced persistent threat MuddyWater—also tracked as Mango Sandstorm and Static Kitten and linked to Iran's MOIS since 2017—has deployed *RustyWater*, a Rust-based remote access trojan, via spear-phishing emails carrying malicious Microsoft Word documents. The campaign targets diplomatic, maritime, financial, and telecommunications sectors across the Middle East and South Asia, including India. The malware employs asynchronous command-and-control, registry persistence, modular payloads, and extensive AV/EDR evasion, evolving from earlier loaders such as MuddyViper and BugSleep. Tracked by Symantec and Seqrite as

Operation IconCat, the activity signals escalating cyber espionage risks for maritime infrastructure and Indo-Pacific chokepoints amid regional tensions.

Source: [Here](#), 10 January 2026

INDIA TO DEEPEN ENGAGEMENT WITH SINGAPORE-BASED SHIP SAFETY AGENCY

India, a founding member of ReCAAP, is seeking deeper engagement with its Singapore-based Information Sharing Centre amid 132 piracy and armed robbery incidents recorded in Asia in 2025, up from 107 in 2024. Most incidents involved petty thefts at anchorages targeting engine spares. ReCAAP ISC Executive Director Vijay Chafekar has highlighted closer coordination with India's Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre ahead of the forum's 20th anniversary in March 2026. The Straits of Malacca-Singapore remain hotspots, while timely arrests in Kakinada have limited risks in Indian waters. Only one Indian-flagged vessel was affected.

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

MARITIME CYBERSECURITY FRAMEWORK FLAGGED AT OCEAN CENTRES INDIA MEET

IIM Visakhapatnam hosted Ocean Centres India's fifth workshop on January 12, 2026, urging a dedicated maritime cybersecurity framework for India's ocean economy. Under the UN Global Compact and Lloyd's Register Foundation, with the Ministry of Earth Sciences and DGS support, the "safe sustainable ocean economy" event across eight hubs, like Mumbai and Kochi, stressed hardening tech, skilling, and regional ties amid port/shipping cyber risks. Governor Uma Sudhindra highlighted the oceans' trade role; DGS Capt V Pardhasaradhi noted green shipping like Panchamrit, Swachh Sagar. Panels tackled port security and blue finance gaps.

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

MARITIME FORCES

INDIAN NAVY TO ESTABLISH BASE IN WEST BENGAL'S HALDIA TO BOLSTER MARITIME MONITORING OF CHINA, BANGLADESH

The Indian Navy has established a strategic naval detachment at Haldia, utilising the existing dock complex on the Hooghly River near its Bay of Bengal confluence to enhance maritime surveillance. The facility will operate fast interceptor crafts and 300-tonne New Water Jet Fast Attack Crafts capable of 40–45 knots, equipped with CRN-91 guns and loitering munitions. Focused on countering PLAN activity, maritime infiltration, and illegal crossings in shallow northern Bay waters, the compact base complements the Eastern Naval Command. It strengthens rapid-response capabilities under SAGAR and aligns with 2024 DAC approvals for new surface combatants amid intensifying Indian Ocean Region competition.

Source: [Here](#), 10 January 2026

REPORT: INDIA WANTS TO RAMP UP ITS WARSHIP EXPORTS

India's Ministry of Defence has directed state-owned shipyards—Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd, Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers, Goa Shipyard Ltd, and Hindustan Shipyard Limited—to expand capacity for warship exports through docking and manufacturing upgrades, customised designs, and integrated construction to reduce build timelines by 5–7 years. The move aligns with India's SAGAR vision as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region. India has exported fast attack craft and corvettes to Mauritius, Seychelles, and Sri Lanka, and is targeting Southeast Asian markets amid rising demand and competitive cost advantages, supporting *Atmanirbhar Bharat* and economies of scale.

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

STEALTH FRIGATE TARAGIRI TO JOIN INDIAN NAVY IN FEBRUARY, BOOSTING MARITIME STRIKE POWER

Indian Navy will induct *Taragiri*, the fourth Nilgiri-class stealth frigate under the ₹45,000 crore Project 17A, in February 2026, following its delivery by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd on 28 November 2025. Built in 81 months—faster than the lead ship—the 6,670-tonne, 149-metre frigate incorporates 75 per cent indigenous content, supporting over 200 MSMEs and 14,000 jobs. Equipped with BrahMos missiles, Barak-8 air defence systems, MF-STAR radar, advanced ASW and electronic warfare suites, and helicopter operations, *Taragiri* enhances India's SAGAR posture, maritime power projection, and sea lines of communication security in the Indian Ocean Region.

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

EXPLAINED: HOW INDIAN NAVY'S AMPHIBIOUS AIRCRAFT PLAN WILL ENHANCE COASTAL SURVEILLANCE, SAR AND ISLAND DEFENCE

India's Ministry of Defence issued a Request for Information on 11 January 2026 to wet-lease four fixed-wing amphibious aircraft for four years to enhance Indian Navy capabilities in coastal defence, ISR, search and rescue, logistics, HADR, and anti-piracy operations. Designed for both water and runway operations, the platforms will support missions across India's 7,500 km coastline and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, addressing capability gaps where conventional fixed-wing assets are constrained. The move bypasses stalled ShinMaywa US-2i negotiations, leveraging OEM-led leasing with full crew and maintenance, while bridging toward indigenous solutions amid rising Indian Ocean Region threats.

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

INDIA, SRI LANKA NAVY TALKS FOCUS ON STRENGTHENING MARITIME SECURITY

The 13th India–Sri Lanka Navy Staff Talks concluded in Colombo on 14 January 2026, co-chaired by Rear Admiral Srinivas Maddula, ACNS (FCI), Indian Navy, and Rear Admiral Ruwan Rupasena, Director General Training, Sri Lanka Navy. Discussions focused on strengthening bilateral maritime security cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region through enhanced joint exercises, including SLINEX-2025, training exchanges, HADR interoperability, and coordinated anti-piracy and counter-narcotics operations. The talks reinforced the SAGAR framework and long-standing defence ties, complementing recent high-level engagements amid shared regional security challenges.

Source: [Here](#), 15 January 2026

SHIPPING, PORTS AND OCEAN ECONOMY

INDIA'S FIRST MARITIME NBFC BEGINS LENDING OPERATIONS, SANCTIONS ₹4,300 CRORE

Sagarmala Finance Corporation Limited (SMFCL), India's first maritime-focused NBFC, was inaugurated on June 26, 2025, and commenced lending operations after RBI registration on June 19. At its 51st Board meeting on December 30, 2025, it sanctioned ₹4,300 crore loans—targeting ₹8,000 crore FY26 book—backed by ₹25,000 crore Maritime Development Fund (₹20,000 crore MIF + ₹5,000 crore IIF) nodal role under MoPSW. Tailored financing bridges gaps for ports, MSMEs, startups in shipbuilding (₹44,700 crore scheme ahead), infrastructure per Amrit Kaal 2047 blue economy vision. Union Minister Sonowal hailed it as a maritime growth milestone.

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

INDIA'S MARITIME REFORMS GAIN MOMENTUM IN 2025, MARKING A TRANSFORMATIONAL PHASE FOR THE SECTOR

India's maritime sector underwent transformational reforms in 2025, passing five landmark bills, including the Indian Ports Act 2025 (replacing the 1908 Act for unified governance), Merchant Shipping Act 2025 (aligning with IMO standards, enabling partial foreign ownership), and Carriage of Goods by Sea Bill 2025 (streamlining cargo logistics per Hague-Visby Rules). These slash red tape, boost *Aatmanirbharta* via digital docs and coastal cargo to 230MT by 2030, cut disputes, and draw ₹80 lakh crore investments under Maritime Amrit Kaal. PM Modi hailed

policy shifts at India Maritime Week, enhancing *Sagarmala*, green ports, and global hub status amid IOR competition.

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

ADANI MUNDRA PORT MAKES HISTORY BY BERTHING INDIA'S FIRST FULLY LADEN VLCC

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zones Mundra Port has achieved a historic milestone by directly berthing the fully laden VLCC *MT New Renown*, carrying approximately 3.3 lakh cubic metres of crude oil, eliminating reliance on offshore SPMs. The 400-metre jetty, with a 25-metre depth and 21.6-metre draft, supports vessels of up to 3.6 lakh tonnes displacement, handling strong currents through high-capacity loading arms. Linked via a 489-km pipeline to the HPCL Rajasthan Refinery, the development reduces import costs, enhances India's energy security, and advances *Sagarmala*-driven port efficiency and regional growth.

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

BUDGET 2026: AS THE WORLD FRACTURES, INDIA MUST LOOK SEAWARD

India's Union Budget 2026 must prioritise maritime investments amid global economic fragmentation, given that nearly 90 per cent of India's trade by volume moves by sea, underpinning energy security and coastal growth. Experts advocate scaling *Sagarmala* to develop deep-water ports, green fuel hubs, and port-led industrial clusters under the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047. Key proposals include attracting ₹80 lakh crore in shipbuilding investment, incentives for container manufacturing, low-cost finance, MSME tax relief, passage of the Indian Ports Bill 2025, and stronger multimodal connectivity to reduce logistics costs. These measures would advance *Atmanirbhar Bharat*, strengthen transshipment hubs such as Vizhinjam, and generate blue economy employment.

Source: [Here](#), 10 January 2026

INDIA'S ULTRA-MEGA ATLANTA BAY PORT PLAN PUTS NORTH ANDAMAN AT THE HEART OF BAY OF BENGAL STRATEGY, SAY EXPERTS

India advances strategic maritime dominance via the ultra-mega Atlanta Bay port in North Andaman's Diglipur, focusing on deep-water dry bulk transshipment for Capesize vessels up to 200,000 DWT with a 4,000m quay—the longest continuous berth nationally. Announced October 2025 post-IIT Madras pre-feasibility, under Lt Gov Admiral DK Joshi (Retd)'s oversight and Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port's six-month techno-commercial study, it pairs with Galathea Bay's container hub to bookend Andaman & Nicobar infrastructure. Experts highlight Bay of Bengal SLOC control, naval resupply near Malacca Strait, countering China-Bangladesh-Pakistan moves while slashing transshipment costs currently lost to Colombo/Singapore.

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

MARINE ENVIRONMENT

ORGANIC CARBON IN A SUBMARINE PRESSURE COOKER

Researchers from MARUM have shown that organic carbon in sediments acts as a “submarine pressure cooker” at the Jøtul Hydrothermal Field on the sediment-covered Knipovich Ridge, challenging the view that serpentinisation is the sole source of hydrogen. At depths of around 3 km, high pressures and supercritical fluids thermocatalytically crack buried organic matter, releasing hydrogen and methane that rival rock-driven processes and sustain chemosynthetic life. Gas-tight sampling during the 2024 MSM131 expedition and thermodynamic modelling confirm sediment–fluid interactions as a dominant hydrogen source, reshaping understanding of deep-sea energy systems and their relevance to Earth and ocean worlds beyond.

Source: [Here](#), 07 January 2026

‘PROFOUND IMPACTS’: RECORD OCEAN HEAT IS INTENSIFYING CLIMATE DISASTERS, DATA SHOWS

Oceans absorbed a record 23 zettajoules of heat in 2025—equivalent to 39x annual global energy use—marking the ninth consecutive hottest year for ocean heat content despite La Niña, per *Advances in Atmospheric Sciences* study. This ~500 zettajoules since the 1940s (90% excess heat) supercharged disasters like intensified cyclones, marine heatwaves, coral bleaching, stratification reducing oxygen/fish stocks, and accelerated sea level rise. Tropical Atlantic, Mediterranean, North Indian/Southern Oceans are the hottest; long-term acceleration post-1991 demands emission cuts as oceans buffer the atmosphere but amplify extremes.

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

MARINE DARKWAVE AS AN EVENT-BASED FRAMEWORK TO ASSESS UNUSUAL PERIODS OF REDUCED UNDERWATER LIGHT AVAILABILITY

Marine darkwaves (MDWs) are episodic events of sharply reduced underwater light availability, analogous to marine heatwaves but driven by darkness. Triggered by cloud cover, sediment plumes, phytoplankton blooms, or resuspension, MDWs are detected when daily integrated irradiance falls below seasonal or depth-specific thresholds for two or more days. Metrics include duration, intensity, peak timing, and cumulative light deficit. Validated using long-term data from SBC-LTER, the Ligurian Sea, and New Zealand, observed events lasting up to 64 days significantly disrupted photosynthesis and ecosystem resilience, underscoring the need for unified monitoring amid intensifying climate stressors.

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

SEAGRASS MEADOWS COULD BE GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH — YET THEY'RE DISAPPEARING FAST

Seagrass meadows underpin "One Health" by linking human, animal, and environmental well-being through sediment stabilization, nutrient filtration, and support for marine biodiversity. These underwater flowering plants serve as nurseries for fish/shrimp sustaining fisheries, sequester "blue carbon" up to 35x faster than rainforests (18% oceanic total despite 0.1% coverage), buffer ocean acidification via oxygen release, and trap pathogens, reducing coral disease/seafood contamination. Yet disappearing at football-field rates every 30 minutes from pollution, overfishing, coastal development, and warming, their loss amplifies flooding, algal blooms, disease spillover (e.g., bird flu via displaced wildlife), and climate impacts—demanding protection over restoration for resilient coastal societies.

Source: [Here](#), 15 January 2026

GAME-CHANGING INTERNATIONAL OCEAN TREATY COMES INTO FORCE

The UN's Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement entered force on January 17, 2026, legally binding 81 nations—including China, Japan, France, and Brazil—to sustainably manage high seas and international seabed covering two-thirds of ocean surface and 90% of habitable volume, filling critical UNCLOS gaps. It mandates environmental impact assessments, marine protected areas, genetic resource benefit-sharing, and inclusive governance with Indigenous Peoples and gender balance to combat climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. US signed but unratified, India awaits legislation, Russia abstains over navigation concerns; first CoP within one year drives universal implementation amid accelerating ocean crises.

Source: [Here](#), 15 January 2026

GEOPOLITICS

KRA CANAL OR LANDBRIDGE? THE ANSWER WILL SHIFT GLOBAL GEOPOLITICS

Thailand has shifted from the long-mooted Kra Canal to a USD 28–30 billion *Landbridge* project across the Kra Isthmus, linking Ranong on the Andaman Sea with Chumphon via twin deep-sea ports, rail, highway, and pipeline infrastructure. Designed to bypass congestion in the Strait of Malacca, Phase I bids are due in December 2025, with operations targeted by 2030. While promising jobs and growth, the project carries geopolitical implications, including potential Chinese financing under the BRI and strategic recalculations by India, the US, and Japan over Andaman Sea–Indian Ocean trade flows.

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

A NEW RED SEA CHESSBOARD AND INDIA'S STRATEGIC WINDOW

Houthi disruptions since October 2023 have affected nearly 12 per cent of global trade transiting the Bab-el-Mandeb, forcing Suez rerouting that has raised India's freight costs by up to 300 per cent on roughly USD 80 billion in annual trade and impacted 30 per cent of oil and LNG imports. Israel's recognition of Somaliland adds a counterweight to Iran-backed threats amid shifting Red Sea dynamics involving the UAE, Türkiye, and Saudi Arabia. For India, this opens a strategic window to leverage Global South diplomacy through naval patrols, diaspora linkages, and *Sagarmala*–Africa outreach in energy, logistics, and digital infrastructure, strengthening maritime stability and resilient trade flows without formal alliances.

Source: [Here](#), 05 January 2026

INDIA PICKS DIPLOMACY OVER DESTROYERS: WHY NEW DELHI SKIPPED BRICS' NAVAL DRILLS

India opted out of the BRICS Plus naval exercise *Will for Peace 2026* (9–16 January, Simon's Town, South Africa), a non-institutionalised South African initiative led by China with participation from Russia, Iran, and the UAE, and without full BRICS representation. Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal stated that India prioritises structured formats such as IBSAMAR over ad hoc drills. The decision reflects the post-*Galwan* trust deficit with China pending LAC disengagement, India's emphasis on strategic autonomy, Indo-Pacific and QUAD priorities, and sensitivity to anti-West optics and sanctions risks, while bilateral exercises like Indra continue.

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

WILL THE QUAD REWRITE INDO-PACIFIC MARITIME SECURITY?

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD)—US, India, Japan, Australia—revitalizes as a minilateral for free, open Indo-Pacific amid China's maritime assertiveness in the South China Sea, IOR, and Taiwan Strait. Originating from the 2004 tsunami aid, revived in 2017 post-Dhoklam, it drives IPMDA for domain awareness, Malabar exercises, Ports of Future, critical minerals, and infrastructure countering BRI. Despite Trump tariffs straining ties in 2025, working-level commitments persist via the July FM statement and November Malabar, balancing security, trade, and non-traditional threats like piracy.

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

SUBSEA CABLE RISK A MIX OF BATHYMETRY AND GEOPOLITICS

Subsea cable vulnerabilities blend bathymetry and geopolitics, with territorial seas/EEZs riskier than high seas due to shallow waters and accessible landing stations. UAE-Canada-Japan-Taiwan study on Unity/EAC-Pacific, Asia-America Gateway, and Tata cables shows grey-zone sabotage peaks between peace/war, exploiting attribution ambiguity for disruption without retaliation.

Experts prioritize proximity/tension over depth; wartime targets communications, peacetime sows uncertainty. Red Sea cuts (SMW4/IMEWE, Sep 2025) underscore the fragility of chokepoints amid Houthi threats. The six-point framework urges tiered security, early warnings, regional asset pooling, and public-private protocols for resilience.

Source: [Here](#), 15 January 2026