



# 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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## AS SUEZ TRAFFIC CAUTIOUSLY RETURNS, HOUTHIS MAKE NEW THREATS

Suez Canal traffic is cautiously rebounding post-Houthi ceasefire, yet Yemen's rebels have issued fresh threats via propaganda videos—hinting at imminent attacks on commercial vessels—prompting carriers to pause Red Sea route restorations. Despite no incidents since September 2025 (e.g., *Minervaagacht* hit), transits linger 60% below 2023 peaks, with Maersk resuming select crossings like *Sebarok* and *Denver* amid lingering insurer caution. This volatility underscores persistent risks to 12% of global trade, necessitating robust naval escorts and contingency planning to stabilise vital Europe-Asia arteries.

Source: [Here](#), 16 January 2026

## 2025 MARITIME SECURITY REPORT: 132 PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY INCIDENTS IN ASIA

Asia recorded 132 piracy and armed robbery incidents against ships in 2025, a significant surge from 107 in 2024, according to ReCAAP and Maritime Fairtrade reports, reversing prior stability trends despite remaining below 2015 peaks. The Straits of Malacca and Singapore emerged as primary hotspots, accounting for most cases—predominantly Category 3/4 non-violent boardings targeting bulk carriers, tankers, and lightly manned tug-barges via opportunistic thefts of spares and scrap during night-time transits. Dense traffic, predictable routes, and socioeconomic pressures in coastal communities fuelled this uptick, with bulk carriers being hit over 50 times. These developments highlight the need for heightened vigilance and robust regional enforcement to protect vital Indo-Pacific trade arteries.

Source: [Here](#), 19 January 2026

## SHADOW FLEET & SATELLITE INTERFERENCE RAISE MARITIME SECURITY ALARM

Coastal states of the Baltic Sea, North Sea, and Iceland have issued a joint warning on escalating maritime security threats from the shadow fleet—non-compliant tankers risking collisions, spills, and navigation hazards—and persistent GNSS jamming/spoofing disrupting ship positioning, aviation, and SAR operations. These incidents, concentrated in the Baltic, undermine safety in high-traffic areas, with calls for flag states, ports, operators, and class societies to enforce IMO standards rigorously. The declaration emphasises multi-GNSS redundancies and incident reporting to mitigate risks to European fisheries, trade, and infrastructure.

Source: [Here](#), 27 January 2026

## PIRACY: A CONTINUING THREAT TO SEAFARERS

The International Maritime Bureau reports a 23% rise in global piracy and armed robbery incidents in 2025 compared to 2024, reaching 137 cases, with persistent hotspots underscoring ongoing vulnerabilities. Although Gulf of Guinea numbers remained low, crew kidnappings there nearly doubled to 23—92% of the global total—while Somali pirates seized three vessels and 26 hostages. The Singapore Strait recorded 107 incidents, the highest since 2007, with weapons used in 30% of attacks worldwide, exacerbating psychological impacts on seafarers. These developments necessitate sustained vigilance, adherence to Best Management Practices, and strengthened regional cooperation to protect critical maritime trade routes.

Source: [Here](#), 28 January 2026

## SHIPPING TARGETED IN EMERGING BRAZILIAN SMUGGLING TREND

Brazil's northern and northeastern ports are increasingly targeted by transnational drug cartels smuggling cocaine via merchant vessels to Europe and West Africa, according to alerts from NorthStandard and Brazmar. Narcotics are concealed in containers, hull sea chests, and bulk carrier voids, notably at the Port of Santos, a major sugar export hub. In 2025, several bulk carriers bound for Nigeria were detained after cocaine was found in sugar cargoes, leading to crew arrests. Penalties include 5–15 years' imprisonment, with enhanced sanctions for transnational offences. Operators are advised to strengthen BMP compliance amid rising seizures highlighted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Source: [Here](#), 28 January 2026

# MARITIME FORCES

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## INDIAN NAVY'S INS *SUDARSHINI* EMBARKS ON 10-MONTH 'LOKAYAN 26' VOYAGE

INS *Sudarshini*, the Indian Navy's sail training ship, embarked from Kochi on 20 January 2026 for *Lokayan 26*—a 10-month, 22,000+ nautical mile voyage visiting 18 ports across 13 countries, embodying *Vasudhiva Kutumbakam*. Over 200 Navy/Coast Guard trainees gain long-range navigation expertise while engaging in maritime partnerships, including *Escale à Sète* (France) and *SAIL 250* (New York), advancing the MAHASAGAR vision. First stop, Salalah, Oman (concluded 5 Feb), reinforces cultural diplomacy and Indo-Pacific interoperability amid regional security flux.

Source: [Here](#), 20 January 2026

## **HAL'S NAVAL UTILITY HELICOPTER-MARINE SET FOR 2027 DEBUT, USHERING IN ERA OF TWIN-ENGINE MARITIME UTILITY**

HAL's Naval Utility Helicopter-Marine (UH-M), a twin-engine platform tailored for maritime operations, is set for 2027 induction into the Indian Navy and Coast Guard, replacing 76 ageing Chetak helicopters. Featuring corrosion-resistant coatings, flotation gear, foldable rotors/tails for warship hangars, reinforced landing gear, and naval avionics/sensors, it supports troop transport, SAR, medevac, cargo, and limited combat roles. Prototype ready with first flight slated for 2025-26, this indigenous design advances *Aatmanirbhar Bharat* by enhancing open-sea safety over single-engine alternatives.

Source: [Here](#), 21 January 2026

## **IG DEFENCE SECURES ARMY, NAVY ORDERS FOR INDIGENOUS COUNTER-DRONE SYSTEM**

IG Defence's IG T-Shul Pulse Anti-Drone System, now ordered by Indian Army and Navy, offers multi-band RF jamming up to 2 km range, neutralising hostile drones via directional electronic denial without disrupting friendly comms or naval systems. Lightweight and man-portable, it enables rapid frontline deployment for perimeter security, base protection, and countering asymmetric threats like surveillance or infiltration. Fully indigenous under *Aatmanirbhar Bharat*, its scalable production bolsters India's C-UAS edge against regional drone proliferation.

Source: [Here](#), 24 January 2026

## **INDIAN NAVY'S FIRST TRAINING SQUADRON DEPARTS BELAWAN, REINFORCES MARITIME TIES WITH INDONESIA**

The Indian Navy's First Training Squadron (1TS)—comprising INS *Tir*, INS *Shardul*, INS *Sujata*, and ICGS *Sarathi*—departed Belawan, Indonesia, on 23 January 2026 after a three-day port call that bolstered bilateral maritime ties. Personnel engaged in professional interactions such as cross-deck visits, joint training, facility tours of the Indonesian Naval Regional Command I, and cultural exchanges, including yoga sessions, school visits, sports fixtures, and community outreach. This deployment under India's Act East Policy and *MAHASAGAR* vision advances interoperability with Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) partners, reinforcing regional security amid Indo-Pacific challenges.

Source: [Here](#), 25 January 2026

## **PROJECT-75I: HOW INDIA'S \$8 BILLION SUBMARINE UPGRADE RESHAPES THE PAKISTAN, CHINA EQUATION**

India's Project 75I submarine programme nears finalisation of an \$8 billion contract with Mazagon Dock and Germany's thyssenkrupp Marine Systems for six advanced 2,500-ton AIP-equipped submarines featuring vertical launch systems and indigenous combat management. This counters Pakistan's eight Chinese Hangor-class AIP subs by 2028 and China's growing Indian Ocean presence, restoring deterrence parity amid fleet depletion. Contract signature by March 2026 will enforce sea denial in chokepoints like Malacca and strengthen QUAD maritime posture.

Source: [Here](#), 31 January 2026

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

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### **VGRC, MARITIME JOBS AND MULTI-CRORE INVESTMENTS: HOW THE GUJARAT GOVT IS LINKING THE STATE'S VAST COASTLINE WITH THE BLUE ECONOMY**

Gujarat leverages its expanded coastline—precisely remapped via advanced technologies revealing greater maritime potential—for blue economy growth, as showcased at the Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conference (VGRC) in Rajkot (11-12 Jan 2026), inaugurated by PM Modi. The event secured 5,492 MoUs worth ₹5.78 lakh crore across ports, logistics, fisheries, and coastal industries, with Kutch attracting over half the investment via Adani-led marine projects and MSME participation, generating jobs and infrastructure. This sea-led strategy aligns with Viksit Bharat 2047, transforming Gujarat into India's maritime growth engine.

Source: [Here](#), 17 January 2026

### **INDIA EXPLORING OPTIONS TO RETAIN PRESENCE IN IRAN'S CHABAHAR PORT**

India is actively exploring options to sustain its strategic presence at Iran's Chabahar Port amid US sanctions pressures, securing a conditional waiver until April 2026 that permits India Ports Global Ltd (IPGL) operations at Shahid Beheshti Terminal despite broader Iran restrictions. The port remains vital for accessing Afghanistan and Central Asia via the INSTC, bypassing Pakistan, under a 10-year \$370m investment pact—though Union Budget 2026 omitted funding allocations amid Trump-era tariff threats. New Delhi engages Washington and Tehran

diplomatically to balance multi-alignment while countering China's Gwadar, underscoring Chabahar's enduring geopolitical value.

Source: [Here](#), 19 January 2026

## INDIAN PORT FLOW BOOSTED BY INFRASTRUCTURE, TECHNOLOGY INVESTMENT EFFORTS

India's port throughput has surged due to sustained infrastructure investments under *Sagarmala*, with 234 projects worth ₹2.91 lakh crore advancing modernisation—104 of which have been completed, adding over 230 MTPA capacity at major ports alone. Efficiency metrics like container vessel turnaround now rival global benchmarks at seven ports, bolstered by ₹80 lakh crore planned investments through 2035 targeting deep-draft hubs like *Vadharan* and Galathea Bay. Digitisation, mechanisation, and multimodal connectivity via dedicated freight corridors further slash logistics costs, positioning Indian ports as competitive gateways for Indo-Pacific trade amid rising global volumes.

Source: [Here](#), 21 January 2026

## DPA KANDLA SIGNS AGREEMENT FOR 5 MEGA WATT GREEN HYDROGEN PLANT

Deendayal Port Authority (DPA), Kandla signed an agreement with Oswal Greenzo Energies for the design, supply, installation, testing, and commissioning of India's first port-based 5 MW Green Hydrogen Plant. Expected to produce ~840 metric tons annually, it will fuel port operations, mobility, and logistics, slashing carbon emissions under the National Green Hydrogen Mission and PM Modi's *Viksit Bharat* vision. This pioneering decarbonisation hub positions Kandla as a maritime green energy leader, fostering clean tech adoption across India's logistics ecosystem.

Source: [Here](#), 29 January 2026

## NITI AAYOG HOLDS CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON STRENGTHENING NON-MAJOR PORTS

NITI Aayog convened a consultative meeting on 29 January 2026 in New Delhi with State Maritime Boards, port operators, and Central Ministries to address challenges facing non-major ports and enhance their role in India's port-led development strategy. Discussions focused on infrastructure upgrades, multimodal connectivity, digitalisation for operational efficiency, and regulatory, investment, and governance reforms to boost competitiveness and attract private capital. The exchange underscored the need for stronger Centre-State collaboration, generating insights to foster an integrated maritime ecosystem aligned with Sagarmala and PM Gati Shakti initiatives.

Source: [Here](#), 30 January 2026

# MARINE ENVIRONMENT

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## INTENSE UNDERWATER BLACKOUTS CAN LAST FOR MONTHS, IMPACT MARINE ECOSYSTEM, SAY SCIENTISTS

Scientists have identified marine darkwaves—intense underwater blackouts lasting hours to months, caused by sediment, algal blooms, floods, or cyclones—that drastically reduce light penetration to seafloors, threatening coastal ecosystems worldwide. Using data from California and New Zealand, researchers documented events up to 64 days with near-100% light loss, disrupting photosynthesis in kelp forests, seagrasses, and corals, while altering fish, shark, and mammal behaviour with cascading food web effects. This new framework complements marine heatwave tracking, urging monitoring as climate-driven storms intensify risks to productivity and biodiversity.

Source: [Here](#), 19 January 2026

## EARTHQUAKES BENEATH ANTARCTICA MAY BE THE REASON OF RICH MARINE LIFE

Earthquakes beneath Antarctica's Southern Ocean trigger massive phytoplankton blooms by disturbing deep-sea hydrothermal vents, releasing iron-rich nutrients that fuel microscopic algae growth 4-7 months later, as revealed in a recent *Nature Geoscience* study analysing 1997-2019 seismic and satellite data. These blooms—spanning up to 266,000 sq km—sustain krill, fish, penguins, seals, and whales while enhancing CO<sub>2</sub> absorption, challenging prior models focused solely on wind and circulation. This seismic-ecosystem link highlights episodic deep-ocean drivers critical for polar food webs and global carbon cycles.

Source: [Here](#), 24 January 2026

## ARE DEEP-SEA CORALS AT GREATER CLIMATE RISK THAN FIRST THOUGHT?

Deep-sea corals face greater climate vulnerability than previously assumed, as a forthcoming five-year Indian Ocean study will probe their thermal tolerance, biodiversity, and reproductive resilience amid rising ocean temperatures and acidification. Previously thought insulated from surface heatwaves at 30-150m depths, mesophotic reefs now show susceptibility to expanding low-oxygen zones and pH drops that hinder skeleton formation, threatening biodiversity hotspots. This research gap underscores urgent needs for monitoring and conservation to safeguard these slow-growing ecosystems supporting fisheries and carbon sequestration.

Source: [Here](#), 26 January 2026

## NASA TESTS SPACE SENSORS FOR TRACKING OCEAN DEBRIS

NASA is testing space-based sensors, building on the EMIT instrument aboard the ISS—which detected plastic pollution on land in 2025—to track ocean debris via unique spectral "fingerprints" in reflected sunlight. Scientists, led by NASA interns, are creating reference libraries of marine litter (ropes, tyres, bottle caps) while training AI to scan satellite imagery for concentrations near coasts and garbage patches. Ocean water poses detection challenges, but coastal monitoring could identify pollution sources from rivers, complementing net surveys for global plastic flows.

Source: [Here](#), 28 January 2026

## ‘DRAGON HOLE’: SCIENTISTS FOUND A HUGE OCEAN SINKHOLE HIDING 1,700 STRANGE VIRUSES BENEATH THE SEA

Dragon Hole (Sansha Yongle Blue Hole), Earth's deepest blue hole at 300.89m in the South China Sea's Paracel Islands (16°31.55'N, 111°46.1'E), harbours 1,700 novel viruses in its oxygen-starved depths below 100m, as discovered by Chinese oceanographers. Formed by Miocene limestone dissolution and later flooding, this near-sealed karst sinkhole isolates microbial ecosystems from surface mixing, preserving unique extremophile diversity akin to ancient geological transitions. These viral reservoirs offer unparalleled insights into isolated marine evolution, carbon cycling, and potential biotechnological applications amid contested regional geopolitics.

Source: [Here](#), 25 January 2026

## GEOPOLITICS

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### INDIA PLEDGES COLLECTIVE ACTION AT INDIAN OCEAN CONFERENCE

India pledged collective action for Indian Ocean security at the 9th Indian Ocean Conference (IOC 2026) scheduled for 10-12 April in Mauritius, themed "Collective Stewardship for Indian Ocean Governance," hosted by India Foundation with Mauritius support. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar emphasised coordinated policies amid geopolitical churn—from West Asia tensions to Indo-Pacific flux—highlighting India's role as economic stabiliser, first responder (Yemen, Mozambique, Sri Lanka), and connectivity forger via IMEC and INSTC. Amid BRI debt concerns and EEZ monitoring gaps, India promotes transparent plurilateralism through Quad, naval fusion centres, and capacity-building to harmonise resident/non-resident powers for regional stability.

Source: [Here](#), 17 January 2026

## **AS INDIA SAYS EXITING CHABAHAR 'NOT AN OPTION', HERE'S WHY THE IRANIAN PORT IS CRUCIAL**

India firmly asserts that exiting Chabahar Port remains "not an option," securing a US sanctions waiver until April 2026 to sustain operations at Iran's Shahid Beheshti Terminal via Indian Ports Global Ltd under a 10-year \$370m pact, despite zero Union Budget 2026 allocation. This strategic gateway bypasses Pakistan, enabling direct trade, humanitarian aid (e.g., wheat to Afghanistan), and connectivity to Central Asia via INSTC, while countering China's Gwadar under CPEC. Chabahar's deep-water access outside the Strait of Hormuz diversifies India's energy imports and maritime footprint, balancing US pressures with Eurasian ambitions.

Source: [Here](#), 17 January 2026

## **MARITIME LEADERS NEED CLARITY AS GEOPOLITICAL EVENTS RESHAPE INDUSTRY DYNAMICS**

Maritime leaders demand policy clarity amid geopolitical turbulence reshaping industry dynamics in 2026, with persistent Red Sea disruptions, Panama drought constraints, South China Sea tensions, and sanctions volatility inflating freight rates and rerouting via Cape of Good Hope. Russia's shadow fleet expansion, EU maritime enforcement against dark vessels, and hybrid threats like Baltic cable sabotage compound risks, while US tariffs under Trump target China trade flows. Amid IMO decarbonisation mandates and AI-driven optimisation, executives prioritise visibility, contingency planning, and public-private intelligence to navigate bifurcated trade blocs and enforcement shifts.

Source: [Here](#), 21 January 2026

## **MARITIME SECURITY, TERRORISM, AND TRADE TAKE CENTER STAGE AT ASEAN-INDIA SUMMIT**

The ASEAN-India Summit reaffirmed shared priorities in maritime security, counter-terrorism, and trade amid rising Indo-Pacific tensions. Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced 2026 as the ASEAN-India Year of Maritime Cooperation, underscoring commitments to HADR, the blue economy, and secure sea lanes through a second Defence Ministers' Meeting and a maritime exercise. The 22nd Summit in Kuala Lumpur (October 2025) advanced the review of ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement and reinforced ASEAN centrality amid external pressures. New initiatives under the 2026–2030 Plan of Action include renewable energy training for the ASEAN Power Grid and extending Quick Impact Projects to Timor-Leste, balancing connectivity with strategic autonomy.

Source: [Here](#), 26 January 2026

## **INDIA-EU FTA SEEN STRENGTHENING MANUFACTURING ON BOTH SIDES: ECONOMIC SURVEY**

India's Economic Survey highlights that the India-EU Free Trade Agreement will mutually strengthen manufacturing sectors by slashing tariffs—EU on 99.5% of Indian goods over seven years, India liberalising 96.6% of EU imports—saving Europe €4bn annually while doubling its exports to India by 2032. Key beneficiaries include India's textiles/apparel (gaining parity with Bangladesh/Vietnam via 12-17% duty cuts), autos (110% to 10% phased), pharmaceuticals, machinery, and EU machinery/aircraft facing India's high baseline tariffs. This landmark pact fosters supply chain resilience, job creation (potentially 6-7mn in Indian textiles), and strategic diversification amid US tariff pressures.

Source: [Here](#), 30 January 2026