

# **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

### HOW A US BLOCKADE ON IRAN HAS SANCTIONED SHIPS TURNING AROUND

The US Navy's blockade of Iran, enforced in the Gulf of Oman and Arabian Sea beyond the Strait of Hormuz, is demonstrating tangible effect, with sanctioned and Iran-linked vessels turning around or halting after transiting the strait. US Central Command confirmed that no vessel breached the blockade in its first 48 hours, with ten ships complying with orders to return. Enforcement is complicated by AIS spoofing and vessels "running dark." Iran, meanwhile, has threatened to extend its own closure to the broader Persian Gulf, Red Sea, and Sea of Oman should the blockade persist. The disciplined implementation of the blockade, if sustained, materially constrains Iran's economic options and strengthens the negotiating position of the United States.

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

### IRAN SEIZES SHIPS IN STRAIT OF HORMUZ AFTER US CALLS OFF RENEWED ATTACKS

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps seized two vessels — the Liberia-flagged Epaminondas and Panama-flagged MSC Francesca — in the Strait of Hormuz, citing maritime violations, marking the first such seizures since the war began. The action followed President Trump's unilateral announcement extending the ceasefire, which Iranian officials neither confirmed nor endorsed, conditioning any full truce on the lifting of the US naval blockade. Peace talks remain stalled, with fundamental differences persisting over Iran's nuclear programme, sanctions relief, and control of the strait. Brent crude closed above \$100 per barrel. The strait's effective closure, having reduced daily vessel crossings from 130 to a handful, underscores its enduring centrality to global maritime trade and the considerable leverage it affords all parties at the negotiating table.

Source: [Here](#), April 23, 2026

### US NAVAL BLOCKADE STRAINS IRAN'S ALREADY FRAGILE ECONOMY

Following the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, the United States shifted to an economic pressure strategy targeting Iran's maritime trade. Iran's economy, already weakened by decades of sanctions, structural corruption, and chronic mismanagement, now faces acute stress — with food inflation having reached nearly 125% prior to the blockade, the rial in freefall, and over 90% of imports dependent on southern ports. The blockade directly disrupts oil and petrochemical exports worth an estimated \$200 million daily, whilst alternative overland routes remain structurally limited. The measures strike at oligarchic networks long embedded in Iran's sanctions economy, potentially creating conditions for meaningful structural recalibration within the Iranian political order.

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

### INDIA DEPLORES ATTACKS ON SHIPS IN STRAIT OF HORMUZ AT UNSC

India's Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Yojna Patel, voiced serious concern at the UN Security Council over attacks on commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, underscoring the waterway's critical importance to India's energy security, trade supply chains, and the welfare of nearly ten million Indian nationals in the Gulf. India called for full respect of international law

governing freedom of navigation and co-sponsored UNSC Resolution 2817. Concurrently, Iran formally complained to the UN Secretary-General, characterising US maritime interceptions as piracy lacking any basis in international law. India's principled multilateral engagement on maritime security signals its growing willingness to assert itself as a consequential stakeholder in the governance of critical global sea lanes.

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

## **PIRACY OFF SOMALIA AND TENSIONS IN GULF OF OMAN ARE RISING**

Twelve maritime security incidents were recorded globally in the week of 20–26 April 2026, with activity concentrated in the Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf of Oman. Notable incidents included IRGC-affiliated gunboat attacks on commercial vessels, armed approaches off the Somali coast, and robberies in the Singapore Strait and West Africa. On 29 April, US forces intercepted an Iranian-linked sanctioned tanker operating under a fraudulent Guyana flag within the INDOPACOM area. Iran condemned the interception as an act of piracy, warning of unprecedented military responses to further US maritime operations. The geographic breadth of these incidents reflects an increasingly complex and multi-theatre maritime security environment, with sustained international naval vigilance remaining essential to the protection of global trade corridors.

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

## **MARITIME FORCES**

### **NAVAL COMMANDERS' CONFERENCE 2026 CONCLUDES; MARITIME STRATEGY UNVEILED AMID WEST ASIA TENSIONS**

The Indian Navy's biannual Naval Commanders' Conference 2026, held in New Delhi from 14–17 April, brought together the service's senior leadership to review operational preparedness, logistics, and human resource management against an increasingly complex geostrategic environment. The Chief of Naval Staff underscored the urgency of sustained combat readiness, technology adoption, and deeper engagement with partner navies. Notably, the conference witnessed the release of the Indian Navy Maritime Security Strategy 2026, aligned with Defence Forces Vision 2047, addressing disruptive technologies and evolving warfare dynamics. The concurrent "Sagar Manthan" forum focused on defence research and industry participation. The strategy's release at a moment of heightened regional maritime tension signals India's deliberate intent to anchor its growing naval ambitions within a coherent, long-term institutional framework.

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

### **INS *DHRUV*: INDIA'S OCEAN SENTINEL FOR MISSILE TRACKING AND STRATEGIC SURVEILLANCE**

INS *Dhruv*, India's indigenously built Missile Range Instrumentation Ship commissioned in 2021, represents a sophisticated strategic asset operating at the confluence of ballistic missile tracking, electronic intelligence, and space situational awareness. Constructed by Hindustan Shipyard Limited with inputs from DRDO and NTRO, the vessel's advanced AESA radars and SIGINT suites enable real-time telemetry capture during missile and ASAT tests beyond land-based radar horizons, directly supporting the credibility of India's nuclear triad. The platform additionally conducts electronic surveillance across the wider Indo-Pacific. INS *Dhruv's* capabilities place India amongst a select group of nations that have mastered dedicated maritime-space surveillance, reflecting a decisive and consequential expansion of

India's strategic reach well beyond its immediate neighbourhood.

Source: [Here](#), 18 April 2026

## **INDIA'S MULTI-VECTOR DIPLOMACY KEY AMID WEST ASIA CRISIS; NUCLEAR BREAKTHROUGH BRINGS ENERGY SELF-RELIANCE CLOSER**

Amid the ongoing West Asia conflict, India's multi-vector diplomacy has secured critical energy interests, with the Gulf region supplying approximately 60 per cent of India's crude oil and 50 per cent of its LNG. The Indian Navy's "Operation Urja Suraksha," conducted in coordination with Tehran, ensured safe passage of Indian merchant vessels through the Strait of Hormuz, reflecting New Delhi's adept strategic positioning. Separately, India's Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor at Kalpakkam achieved criticality on 6 April, marking a significant milestone in its three-stage nuclear programme aimed at long-term thorium-based energy self-reliance. Together, these developments underscore India's deliberate and increasingly sophisticated approach to securing both its immediate energy supply chains and its longer-term strategic autonomy.

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

## **SUBMARINE STEALTH PUSH FOR NAVY: KEY STORAGE MODULE FLAGGED OFF**

INOX India Ltd has flagged off a first-of-its-kind simulated Liquid Oxygen storage module for the Indian Navy's indigenous Air Independent Propulsion system, developed at its Kalol facility in Gujarat. The cryogenic module, designed to store oxygen at extremely low temperatures, enables conventional submarines to remain submerged for extended durations without surfacing, significantly enhancing stealth and endurance. Developed under the Naval Material Research Laboratory's AIP programme, the module will now undergo Factory Acceptance Tests. The milestone represents meaningful progress in India's efforts to indigenously develop advanced submarine propulsion technology, directly addressing a critical capability gap in its conventional submarine fleet at a strategically opportune moment.

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

## **INDIA AND SRI LANKA DEEPEN MARITIME COOPERATION THROUGH IN-SLN DIVEX 2026**

The fourth edition of IN-SLN DIVEX 2026, conducted at Colombo from 21–28 April, saw the Indian and Sri Lankan Navies undertake advanced bilateral diving operations, including mixed gas dives exceeding 55 metres over World War-era wrecks. INS Nireekshak anchored the exercise, enhancing interoperability in underwater search, rescue, and salvage. Two BHISM cubes were handed over under India's Aarogya Maitri initiative. Aligned with India's MAHASAGAR vision, DIVEX 2026 reflects the steady deepening of maritime partnerships in the Indian Ocean Region, reinforcing New Delhi's role as a preferred security partner amongst its littoral neighbours.

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

## SHIPPING, PORTS AND OCEAN ECONOMY

### INDIA COMMITS \$1.4 BILLION TO THE CREATION OF A DOMESTIC P&I CLUB

India's cabinet has approved the Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool, backed by a sovereign guarantee of approximately \$1.4 billion, establishing a domestic P&I club to reduce reliance on International Group P&I coverage — access to which remains vulnerable to sanctions and geopolitical disruptions. The pool will cover hull and machinery, cargo, P&I, and war risks for Indian-flagged or controlled vessels, with a combined underwriting capacity of around \$102 million. The initiative follows India's ship registry crossing 14.2 million GT, driven by 92 vessel additions over the past year. The BMI Pool represents a decisive step towards genuine maritime financial sovereignty, materially strengthening India's capacity to sustain trade continuity across volatile and sanctions-affected routes.

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

### HYUNDAI'S PLAN TO SET UP A GIANT \$4 BN SHIPYARD IN TAMIL NADU GAINS STEAM WITH NEW MOU

HD Korea Shipbuilding & Offshore Engineering is finalising plans for a \$4 billion greenfield shipyard at *Thoothukudi*, Tamil Nadu, with an annual capacity of 3.5–4 million GT — equivalent to India's entire projected multi-cluster shipbuilding output. The project, a largely independent HD Hyundai venture with equity participation from Tamil Nadu's SIPCOT and India's Maritime Development Fund, benefits from combined government subsidies of approximately 45–47 per cent of the project cost. HD Hyundai also intends to establish an integrated vendor ecosystem, including potential POSCO steel manufacturing. The investment represents a transformative inflection point in India's shipbuilding ambitions, significantly accelerating its trajectory towards top-five global shipbuilding nation status by 2047.

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

### INDIA MULLS OPTIONS ON IRAN PORT STAKE BEFORE SANCTIONS KICK IN

India is deliberating options regarding its \$120 million stake in Iran's Chabahar port, including temporarily transferring it to an Iranian entity, ahead of the expiry of a US sanctions waiver. New Delhi is conducting parallel talks with Washington and Tehran, seeking to preserve long-term connectivity ambitions whilst managing escalating bilateral tensions with both. Signed under a 2024 ten-year agreement, Chabahar remains central to India's North-South Transport Corridor strategy and Afghanistan connectivity, bypassing Pakistan. The port's uncertain status encapsulates the acute diplomatic tightrope India navigates — balancing its indispensable energy dependence on Iran against the imperatives of sustaining a strategically vital, if increasingly strained, partnership with the United States.

Source: [Here](#), 23 April 2026

### MIDDLE EAST TENSIONS THREATEN INDIA'S GLOBAL PHARMACY ROLE, SQUEEZING PHARMACEUTICAL SUPPLY CHAINS

The Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India (Pharmexcil) warned that a total halt to pharma shipments to West Asia could drain ₹2,500–₹5,000 crore of export value monthly, as freight rates to the region have surged and many shipping lines have suspended operations inside the Gulf. India is among the world's largest generic drug exporters, and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries are major markets. The crisis has exposed the lack of alternative routing and storage infrastructure for time-sensitive pharmaceutical exports. MoPSW strengthened monitoring and preparedness measures in view of the West

Asia situation, focusing on safeguarding Indian seafarers and cargo. The episode reinforces arguments within the ministry for accelerating India's own shipping capacity, reducing dependence on foreign tonnage for critical export sectors.

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

## **INDIA MOVES TO ACCELERATE EXPANDING SHIPPING CAPACITY BY ADDING 62 VESSELS**

India's Minister of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal, outlined an ambitious maritime expansion plan at an inter-ministerial meeting, citing the Strait of Hormuz crisis and repatriation of over 3,000 stranded Indian seafarers as catalysts for urgent action. The government targets adding 62 vessels totalling 2.85 million gross tons to the domestic fleet in FY 2026–27, backed by US\$5.4 billion in investment. Revised cabotage regulations are already prompting major international carriers to re-flag vessels under the Indian registry. With Prime Minister Modi targeting 20 per cent of exports on Indian-flagged vessels and top-five shipbuilding nation status by 2047, the crisis has demonstrably accelerated India's strategic pivot towards genuine maritime self-reliance.

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

## **MARINE ENVIRONMENT**

### **MANTA TRUST LAUNCHES MATCH-FUNDED EARTH RAISE CONSERVATION CAMPAIGN**

The Manta Trust's Earth Raise 2026 campaign, running from 22–29 April, matched every public donation to fund manta and devil ray conservation at a time of mounting ecological and financial pressure. Manta rays — whose wing-spans can reach 7 metres — are among the ocean's most charismatic and ecologically significant megafauna. They are also deeply vulnerable: all oceanic manta ray species are listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List, threatened by bycatch, targeted fisheries for gill plate trade, and boat strike. The campaign coincides with new research published in April showing that boat traffic significantly disrupts the behaviour, feeding patterns, and population dynamics of marine megafauna globally — reinforcing the need for dynamic, adaptive management measures such as seasonal speed limits and targeted closures rather than static rules, which struggle to keep pace with real-world vessel traffic patterns.

Source: [Here](#), 22 April 2026

### **MEPC 84 OPENS WITH CALL FOR CONVERGENCE ON NET-ZERO FRAMEWORK**

The IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee convened its 84th session in London from 27 April to 1 May 2026, with convergence on the Net-Zero Framework for international shipping as its principal objective. Building on the ISWG-GHG 21 intersessional progress, discussions advanced greenhouse gas fuel intensity guidelines, carbon intensity indicator reviews, and emerging technologies, including onboard carbon capture and wind propulsion. Additional agenda items encompassed ballast water management, biofouling, and marine plastic litter. Whilst divisions persist over biofuel classification and framework design, the broad industry coalition's reaffirmation of IMO as the principal global maritime regulator signals a shared recognition that coherent multilateral governance remains indispensable to an effective and equitable maritime energy transition.

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

## **MARINE PROTECTION BODY MUST END DELAY TO REGULATE THE SHIPPING OF PLASTIC PELLETS**

At MEPC 84 in London, the Environmental Investigation Agency has urged member states to adopt mandatory regulations governing the maritime transport of plastic pellets under MARPOL Annex III. Despite the 2021 MV X-Press Pearl disaster off Sri Lanka — the largest recorded marine pellet spill — and subsequent incidents affecting coastlines across multiple nations, progress towards binding measures has been consistently delayed by opposition from plastic-producing states seeking procedural diversion towards SOLAS. The technical, legal, and evidentiary foundations for action are established. MEPC 84 represents a pivotal opportunity to convert existing voluntary frameworks into enforceable obligations, ensuring the IMO fulfils its mandate to prevent a well-documented and entirely preventable source of marine pollution.

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

## **PANAMA'S OCEAN LIFELINE VANISHES FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 40 YEARS**

In 2025, the Gulf of Panama experienced an unprecedented failure of its seasonal upwelling — a 40-year reliable oceanographic process driven by strong northern trade winds that bring nutrient-rich cold water to the surface. Researchers at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, publishing in PNAS, attribute the disruption to anomalously weak winds, resulting in reduced ocean productivity and warmer coastal waters. The event carries significant implications for regional fisheries, coral reef health, and coastal communities. The findings underscore the acute vulnerability of tropical upwelling systems to climate disruption and reinforce the urgent need for enhanced ocean monitoring and forecasting infrastructure across the world's tropical maritime regions.

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

## **THE WORLD'S MARINE PROTECTED AREAS HAVE A STARK SEWAGE PROBLEM**

A major study by the Wildlife Conservation Society and the University of Queensland, analysing over 16,000 marine protected areas globally, has found that nearly three in four MPAs are contaminated by sewage, with contamination levels running ten times higher than in adjacent unprotected waters. In critical tropical regions, 87–92% of coastal MPAs are affected. The findings reveal a fundamental policy gap: ocean designations offer no defence against land-based pollution. Researchers warn the global 30×30 ocean protection commitment cannot succeed without integrating land-based pollution reduction into conservation planning. The study compellingly underscores that effective marine environmental governance must necessarily extend well beyond the ocean boundary itself.

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

## **GEOPOLITICS**

### **GEOPOLITICS MEET DIGITAL SECURITY IN ASEAN'S MARITIME DOMAIN**

The ASEAN maritime domain faces growing cybersecurity and critical underwater infrastructure risks amid intensifying US-China strategic competition. State-backed threats, including AIS spoofing, vessel hijacking, and port cyberattacks, pose significant supply chain vulnerabilities, particularly at chokepoints such as the Straits of Malacca and Singapore. Submarine cable networks face dual threats of sabotage and geopolitical contestation, with China's recent unveiling of a deep-sea cable-cutting tool raising regional

concerns. Singapore and Thailand have jointly proposed ASEAN military cooperation on underwater infrastructure security. Translating policy frameworks into practical regional mechanisms represents the critical next step in ensuring the digital resilience and strategic autonomy of Southeast Asia's maritime domain.

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

## **HORMUZ IS (APPARENTLY) UNBLOCKED. ENERGY MARKETS REMAIN A MESS**

On 17 April, Iran's Foreign Minister declared the Strait of Hormuz "completely open," prompting Brent crude futures to fall over 10% to \$89 per barrel. However, significant uncertainties persist: Iranian-laid mines, mandatory routing through IRGC-designated lanes, a nine-day window tied to the Lebanese ceasefire, and the continued US blockade all constrain genuine freedom of navigation. Even assuming sustained passage, market normalisation requires sequential recovery across Gulf production, tanker availability, and refinery throughput—a process likely to span several months. Whilst the reopening announcement represents a meaningful diplomatic signal, the structural complexity of restoring full energy market stability underscores that a durable resolution remains contingent upon sustained political progress at the negotiating table.

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

## **AFTER HORMUZ, ALL EYES ON THE STRAIT OF MALACCA**

The recently signed US-Indonesia defence pact, concluded amid the ongoing Hormuz crisis, is widely interpreted as a strategic manoeuvre to extend American maritime leverage towards the Strait of Malacca — through which over 60% of China's maritime trade and 80% of its oil imports transit. With the US counter-blockade in Hormuz facing mounting pressure, analysts suggest Washington is positioning the Malacca Strait as a potential economic pressure point against Beijing, whose reported indirect support to Iran has complicated US strategic calculus. The US-Indonesia pact signals a deliberate expansion of America's Indo-Pacific maritime posture, reflecting the enduring primacy of Mahanian Sea power theory in contemporary great-power competition.

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

## **INDIA MUST LEVERAGE INDIAN OCEAN SECURITY MECHANISMS TO PROTECT ITS STRATEGIC INTERESTS**

The US-Iran conflict has demonstrated the Indian Ocean Region's vulnerability to distant power confrontations, exemplified by the sinking of IRIS Dena off Sri Lanka and ballistic missile strikes targeting Diego Garcia. These incidents underscore the inadequacy of existing regional security mechanisms — principally the Colombo Security Conclave and Indian Ocean Naval Symposium — which remain largely confined to non-traditional security cooperation. India's naval modernisation faces structural constraints, with submarine induction lagging and ISR platforms below the envisioned strength. India must leverage its position as the IOR's preeminent naval power to expand regional security cooperation beyond traditional frameworks, forging collective maritime surveillance mechanisms befitting its MAHASAGAR vision and its aspirations as the region's preferred security partner.

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

## **HORMUZ DIGITAL CHOKEPOINT: IRAN WAR RAISES RISKS TO VITAL SUBSEA CABLES**

Iran's warning regarding the vulnerability of submarine cables in the Strait of Hormuz has heightened concerns over critical digital infrastructure amid the ongoing conflict. Fibre-optic cables traversing the seabed carry approximately 99% of global internet traffic, with key systems including AAE-1, FALCON, and the Gulf Bridge International Cable System linking South Asia, Gulf states, and Europe. Whilst deliberate sabotage remains a concern, experts note that prolonged conflict significantly elevates the risk of accidental damage. Repair operations in active conflict zones face acute logistical, insurance, and jurisdictional constraints. The Strait of Hormuz thus emerges as simultaneously a physical and digital chokepoint, whose disruption would carry profound consequences for the global digital economy.

*Source: [Here](#), 28 April 2026*