Government of India
Ministry of Defence

National Maritime Foundation

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND ACADEMIC COOPERATION IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

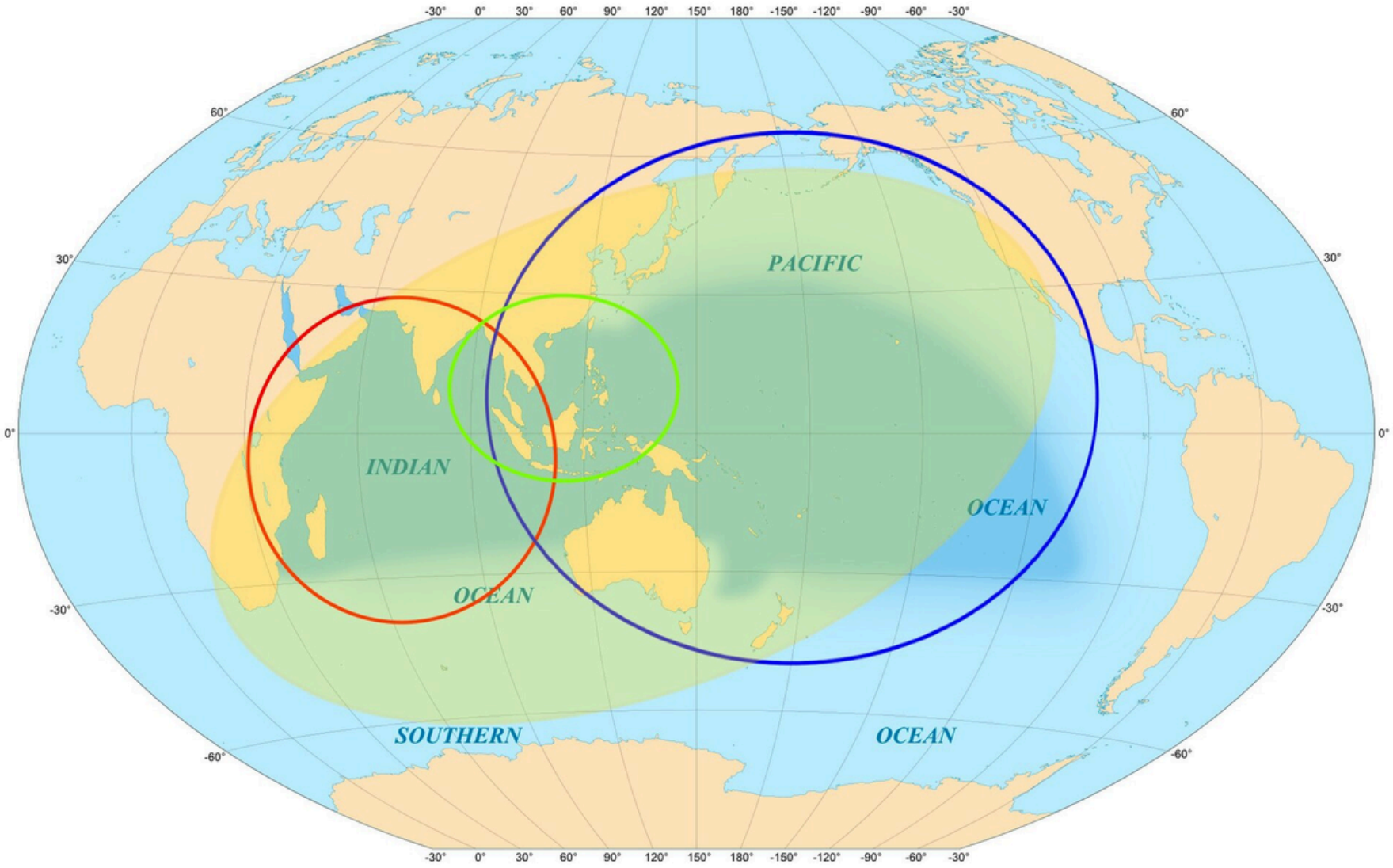
Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue

IPRD 2026

CONFERENCE BOOKLET

03, 04 & 05 November 2026
Manekshaw Centre, New Delhi

A MAP OF THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION



ABOUT THE NMF

"To be the foremost resource centre for the development and advocacy of strategies for the promotion and protection of India's maritime interests"

The genesis of the National Maritime Foundation (NMF), New Delhi, lies in a long-felt need to redress India's historical neglect of its maritime domain. The necessity to address the multifarious disciplines, themes, subjects and nuances that make up not merely 'naval' power (sea power) but that constitute comprehensive 'maritime' power, was well recognised by the Indian Navy and fully endorsed by the Government of India.

The NMF was accordingly established, in 2005, as the nation's first maritime think-tank for the conduct of independent and policy-relevant research on all 'matters maritime'. It was, from it very inception, designed to create and heighten maritime awareness amongst India's policy-makers, intellectual echelons, and civil society at large. Towards this end, it was to be a policy-relevant research organisation of acknowledged excellence that would not only undertake serious, cutting-edge maritime research of its own but would also provide a common platform for advocacy, discourse, and debate, between maritime-related national and international institutions, organisations, and academic establishments, as also reputed and renowned individuals, professionals, and practitioners the world over.

The Foundation was inaugurated on the 15th of February, 2005, by the then Defence Minister of India, the late Dr Pranab Mukherjee, who went on to become the Honourable President of the Republic of India. While the NMF is an independent and autonomous think-tank, its intellectual and organisational development is supported by the Ministry of Defence and the Indian Navy. Over the years that have elapsed since its inception, the NMF has grown rapidly from an embryonic manifestation of India's maritime renaissance into an effervescent, globally respected, and renowned intellectual institution with robust academic linkages within the country as well as overseas.

National Maritime Foundation



MESSAGE

1. The maritime domain is entering an era in which the foundation of maritime power will be shaped as much by advances in science and technology as by the ability to translate them into operational effects. Artificial Intelligence, autonomous systems, quantum technologies, cyber capabilities and space-based assets are redefining the possibilities of maritime surveillance, decision-making and warfighting. Equally, they are expanding the spectrum of vulnerabilities.

2. The ability to develop indigenous solutions, build technological resilience and transform knowledge into credible capability will be a defining determinant of our preparedness for future contingencies. Jointness among the Services, integration across domains and closer engagement with academia, research institutions, startups and industry will be central to this endeavour.

3. No nation can address the full spectrum of emerging maritime challenges in isolation. Trusted partnerships, collaborative research, technology co-development and the exchange of knowledge can strengthen mutual understanding while contributing to regional stability. Cooperation, however, must aspire to more than the exchange of ideas, it must create pathways for practical solutions, enhanced capacities and collective resilience.

4. It is in this context that the theme of the Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue 2026 "Science, Technology and Academic Cooperation within the Indo-Pacific" assumes particular significance. By bringing together perspective from the maritime, scientific, academic and policy communities, IPRD-2026 provides an opportunity to examine how intellectual collaboration can inform operational concepts, shape technological choices and strengthen the foundations of maritime security. Its enduring value will lie in its ability to connect strategic thought with actionable outcomes.

5. I commend the Indian Navy and the National Maritime Foundation for sustaining this important platform for maritime strategic engagement. I am confident that the Dialogue will stimulate fresh thinking and contribute to a more resilient and cooperative maritime order in the Indo-Pacific.

Jai Hind!

(NS Raja Subramani)
General
Chief of Defence Staff & Secretary DMA

29 **Oct 2026**

Admiral Krishna Swaminathan
PVSM, AVSM, VSM
Chief of the Naval Staff



रक्षा मंत्रालय
नौसेना मुख्यालय
साउथ ब्लॉक, नई दिल्ली 110011
Ministry of Defence
Naval Headquarters
South Block, New Delhi 110011

MESSAGE

1. The maritime domain has always been shaped by knowledge - of the oceans, winds, currents and coasts, and of activities that unfold across them. Today, science and technology are transforming the depth of that knowledge and the speed at which it can be converted into action. From space-based surveillance and artificial intelligence-enabled data fusion, to autonomous systems, advanced sensing and underwater technologies, our ability to understand and operate within the maritime domain is expanding rapidly.

2. Amidst this transformation, the Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue has evolved into a strong platform for international engagement for the Indian Navy. Successive editions have sought to develop practical avenues for cooperation by bringing maritime practitioners into sustained dialogue with scientists, technologists, academics and policymakers. IPRD-2026 provides an opportunity to carry this endeavour further, by connecting operational requirements with scientific and technological capabilities, and identifying areas in which knowledge, technology and expertise can be shared and developed collaboratively. Its theme – ***'Science, Technology and Academic Cooperation within the Indo-Pacific'*** – is both timely and consequential.

3. Oceanographic science, climate resilience, emerging maritime technologies, seabed mapping, maritime situational awareness, and academic and research networks are interconnected elements of our collective ability to understand, utilise and safeguard the maritime domain. The very scale and interconnectedness of the ocean make it evident that no navy, agency or nation can secure the maritime domain through its efforts alone. The Indian Navy, therefore, engages extensively with partner navies through information-sharing arrangements, hydrographic cooperation, training exchanges and operational interactions to strengthen international cooperation and interoperability at sea.

4. IPRD-26 serves as a platform and an opportunity to build upon this framework and strengthen institutional linkages amongst R&D agencies, academia, and practitioners across the Indo-Pacific - where *navies* anticipate and address operational challenges; *technologists* develop new means of observation, analysis and response; and *scientists* and *academia* provide the research and human capital necessary to sustain innovation over time.

5. I am confident that deliberations at IPRD-2026 will generate practical ideas to strengthen maritime awareness, technological cooperation, research partnerships and human-capital development across the Indo-Pacific. Such partnerships will enhance our collective ability to respond to maritime challenges and expand our capacity to realise the opportunities the oceans offer.

6. I compliment the National Maritime Foundation, our Knowledge Partner, for its continued efforts in organising the Dialogue, and extend my best wishes to all participants for meaningful and productive deliberations.

Jai Hind. Sam No Varunah.

(Krishna Swaminathan)
Admiral
Chief of the Naval Staff

27 Oct 26

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN



Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi, IN (Retd)
PVSM, AVSM, NM
Chairman, National Maritime Foundation
Former Chief of the Naval Staff
Indian Navy

It is a matter of considerable satisfaction that the National Maritime Foundation (NMF) continues to serve as the Knowledge Partner and principal organiser of the Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue (IPRD) on behalf of the Indian Navy. The confidence reposed in the Foundation carries with it both privilege and responsibility – to ensure that the Dialogue remains intellectually rigorous, policy-relevant and, above all, capable of generating ideas that can be translated into practical outcomes.

The theme selected for IPRD-2026 - "Science, Technology and Academic Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific" - is particularly compelling. Science and technology are transforming almost every dimension of humanity's engagement with the oceans. Yet, technology by itself is neither a strategy nor a solution. Its utility depends upon the knowledge that shapes it, the institutions that develop and govern it, the people who employ it, and the societal purposes that it ultimately serves. This is why the 2026 Dialogue deliberately adopts a conception broader than STEM — expanding the acronym to STEAM — which embraces the social sciences, life sciences, arts and humanities alongside the physical sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics.

This broader STEAM perspective is especially relevant to the maritime domain. Artificial intelligence and autonomous systems, for instance, raise questions that extend well beyond technical performance - who studies their second- and third-order consequences, how societies build the expertise to govern them responsibly, and how academic enquiry can keep pace with the speed of technological change. Oceanographic data acquires greater value when scientific observation is connected with climate policy, economic planning and societal resilience. Marine

biotechnology brings together fundamental science, commercial innovation, environmental stewardship and questions of equitable access. Likewise, technological advances in seabed exploration and resource utilisation cannot be separated from the legal and institutional frameworks within which the global commons are governed. Science tells us increasingly more about what is possible; scholarship and policy must help us determine what is desirable, responsible and sustainable.

There is also a second dimension to the theme that deserves emphasis - cooperation. Research infrastructure, access to data, advanced equipment, specialist expertise and the capacity to translate research into usable technologies vary considerably among countries and institutions across the Indo-Pacific. Cooperation must therefore extend beyond the transfer of finished technologies. It should seek to create enduring relationships through joint research, shared data, academic exchanges, collaborative innovation and the development of human capital. The objective must be not simply to disseminate knowledge, but increasingly to create knowledge together.

The five thematic sessions of IPRD-2026 have been structured with this purpose in mind. Oceanographic Science and Climate Resilience will examine how shared observation and scientific data can strengthen our response to changes in the marine environment. Transformative Maritime Technologies and Dual-Use Implications will consider the opportunities and challenges accompanying decarbonisation, digitalisation, and emerging technologies. Seabed Mapping, Biotechnology and Resource Governance will bring science, sustainable utilisation, and governance into a common conversation. Maritime Situational Awareness: Science, Technology and Interoperability will examine how technological advances and institutional cooperation can improve our collective understanding of the maritime domain. Finally, Academic Networks, Research, and Human Capital Development will focus upon the institutional relationships required to sustain cooperation beyond the duration of the Dialogue itself.

This last aspect is especially important. Conferences can bring people together; networks make cooperation endure. The Indo-Pacific possesses an extraordinary range of universities, maritime training establishments, scientific institutions, think tanks, laboratories, and centres of technological innovation. Yet, the collective value of this intellectual capital will depend upon how effectively these institutions are connected. Stronger links among academia, governments, industry

and maritime practitioners can enable research questions to be informed by real-world requirements, while allowing scientific and technological advances to reach those who can apply them. Existing regional networks can be strengthened, while new bilateral, trilateral and plurilateral partnerships can be developed around specific research and capability requirements.

The purpose of the IPRD has never been simply to describe the maritime challenges confronting the Indo-Pacific. Its value lies in generating specific recommendations and actionable pathways through which cooperation can be advanced. For IPRD-2026, this means asking not only what technologies are emerging, but what should we develop together; what knowledge and data should we share; what institutional mechanisms are required; and what human capabilities must we build to sustain them? These are questions to which scientists, technologists, academics, practitioners and policymakers must collectively seek answers.

I express my sincere gratitude to the Indian Navy for its continued confidence in the National Maritime Foundation, and to the distinguished speakers, delegates, scholars, practitioners and experts from India and abroad whose participation gives the Dialogue its intellectual depth and international character. I am confident that the discussions over the course of IPRD-2026 will generate ideas and partnerships that endure well beyond the conference itself.

I look forward to stimulating discussions, informed debate and, most importantly, practical outcomes that advance science, technology and academic cooperation across the Indo-Pacific.

Jai Hind!



Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi, IN (Retd)
PVSM, AVSM, NM
Chairman, National Maritime Foundation
Former Chief of the Naval Staff
Indian Navy

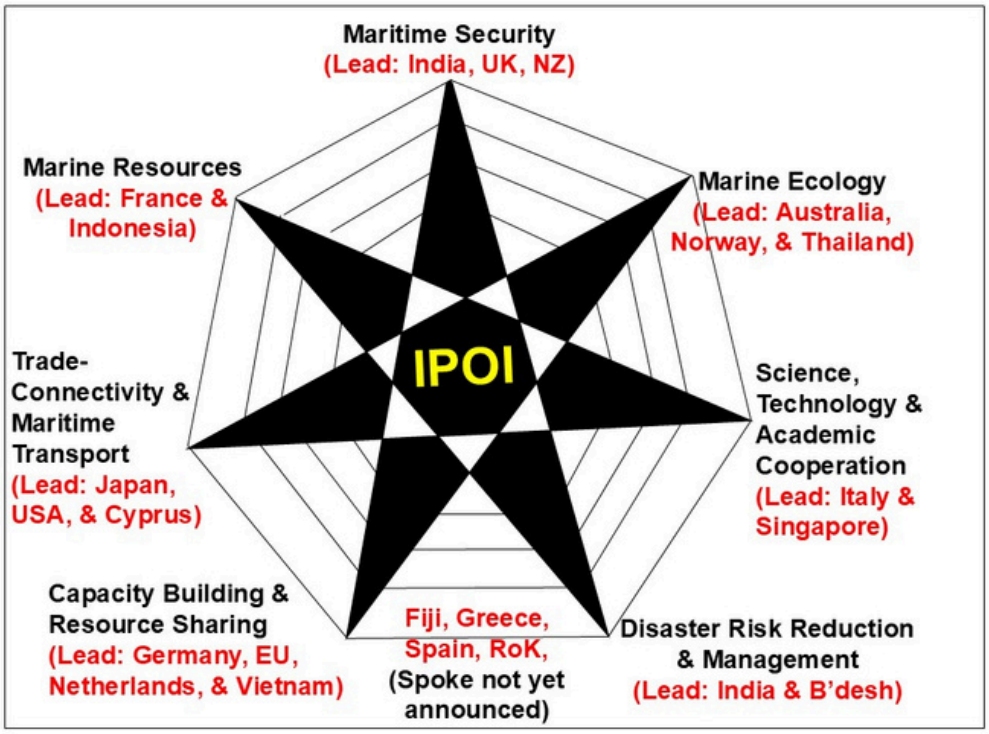
21 October 2026

CONCEPT NOTE

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND ACADEMIC COOPERATION IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

The Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue (IPRD) is the Indian Navy's international, apex-level conference, and is the principal manifestation of the Navy's annual outreach at the strategic level. Each successive edition of the IPRD seeks to focus upon one or more of the seven maritime lines of thrust of the "Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative" (IPOI), which had been launched by India's Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, on 04 November 2019, at the 14th East Asia Summit in Bangkok. Importantly, the IPOI provides *first-order-specificity* to India's maritime policy, which is encapsulated in the acronym MAHASAGAR (standing for *"Mutual And Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions"*). Through three-days of intensive discussions-with and presentations-from Hon'ble maritime experts from across the world, each successive edition of the IPRD provides a slew of specific recommendations at the governmental level as well as at executive and functional ones.

Over the seven years that have elapsed since its initial enunciation, the IPOI has gained considerable international traction. Given that the themes addressed by the IPOI are inextricably interconnected to one another, the initiative is depicted (in Figure 1) as an intricate multidisciplinary web with seven spokes. Figure 1 also indicates nations that have stepped-up to singly or jointly lead one or more of the maritime lines of thrust that each spoke represents.



In the contemporary, fast-paced geopolitical developments that increasingly characterise the Indo-Pacific, *Science, Technology and Academic Cooperation* is arguably the most promising area of regional cooperation within the Indo-Pacific and certainly the most pressing one. *Science, Technology and Academic Cooperation within the Indo-Pacific* has accordingly been selected as the overarching theme of this year's Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue — **IPRD-2026**.

Even while the maritime domain is becoming increasingly technology-intensive, it is important to avoid a narrowly focused regional approach that concentrates cooperative endeavour solely upon STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) but instead, to also incorporate the social sciences, the life sciences, and the humanities (STEAM). The deployment of autonomous systems (including lethal autonomous ones) is no longer some futuristic concept, and neither the technology nor its ethical considerations can be ignored in determining optimal measures for international cooperation and collaboration. Likewise, cooperation in the most beneficial utilisation and exploitation of artificial intelligence (AI) for knowledge management across a wide range of applications, including resource-mapping, requires inputs that transcend the physical sciences. The harnessing of quantum sensing and quantum navigation, especially for underwater surveillance, and the application of big-data platforms to oceanographic modelling are reshaping maritime commerce, scientific enquiry, and naval operations, alike. Yet, these niche technologies require institutional knowledge and human capital to develop, operate, and adapt them. All these are spread extremely unevenly across the Indo-Pacific. Since regional security and growth are the only pathways to prosperity and well-being at the national level, regional cooperation and collaboration are essential, and the most appropriate means and methods to achieve these must be deliberated and identified.

Although the field of cooperative scientific endeavour is vast, IPRD-2026 will, over its five professional thematic-sessions spread over three days, address some of the more pressing elements:

- **Oceanographic Science and Climate Resilience.** The Indo-Pacific is on the frontline of climate-change disruptions such as rising sea levels, ocean acidification, extreme weather events, and degradation of oceanic carbon sequestration systems. The need for regional resilience is self-evident. Cooperation in oceanographic science, including the sharing of data collected by buoys, research vessels, and satellite platforms, is indispensable for understanding these phenomena, modelling their trajectories, and formulating evidence-based policy responses. As a specific deliverable, the assembled subject-matter experts in IPRD-2026 will identify institutional technological cooperative mechanisms that would guide governments, maritime-security agencies, academia, and non-governmental institutions alike.

- **Transformative Maritime Technologies and Dual-Use Implications.** The region faces twin imperatives of decarbonisation and digitalisation. The transition to zero- or near-zero emission fuels demands cross-national research partnerships, harmonisation of technical standards, and shared development of port infrastructure. AI-enabled logistics, automated port operations, and digital shipping corridors hold the promise of dramatically enhancing regional connectivity. Beyond these, a rapidly expanding array of dual-use capabilities such as autonomous systems, quantum sensing, advanced materials, and cyber technologies pose governance challenges that no single State can address while acting in splendid isolation. IPRD-2026 will provide specific recommendations on how collaborative R&D and green/ digital shipping corridor frameworks can accelerate clean maritime energy adoption and determine how regional academic partnerships can advance the responsible governance of dual-use technologies.

- **Collaborative Approaches to Ocean Governance and Maritime Resilience.** Mapping of the vast swaths of the Indo-Pacific seabed is a prerequisite for cable and pipeline laying, deep-sea ecosystem science, and assessment of the availability of critical minerals and hydrothermal vent deposits. Marine biotechnology, with applications spanning pharmaceuticals, biomanufacturing, food systems, and environmental remediation, is poised to become among the most consequential frontiers of how states pursue the blueing of their economy. The provisions of the recently concluded Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement provide a normative framework, which needs to be translated into operational research partnerships and equitable mechanisms, which requires deep academic and scientific collaboration. IPRD-2026 will assess the state of regional cooperation in deep-ocean science and biotechnology and map pathways through joint research, shared data repositories, and capacity-building programmes.

- **Maritime Situational Awareness and Protection of Critical Maritime Infrastructure.** MSA from the seabed to outer space is foundational to holistic maritime security and is a quintessentially national endeavour. However, the movement from MSA to MDA requires discrete MSA knowledge to be exchanged and integrated across multiple geographies. This demands serious cooperation by way of information-exchange. Yet, region-wide near-real-time MDA remains elusive, constrained by technological limitations, information-sharing barriers, and disparate institutional frameworks. Although Underwater Situational/ Domain Awareness (US/DA) is a subset of MSA/MDA the technological challenges are so grave that US/DA is frequently considered (howsoever incorrectly) to be a process that is independent of MSA/MDA. Given the rising threats to underwater infrastructure (not limited to undersea data cables alone), there is a clear need to share best practices and establish cooperative

structures across academia and across naval scientific and operational structures as well. IPRD-2026 will examine the scientific and technological prerequisites for genuinely interoperable regional MDA, with particular attention to space-based assets, AI-enabled data fusion, UDA, and will make specific recommendations on how academic partnerships can accelerate the development of common solutions.

- **Academic Networks, Research, and Human Capital Development.** Sustainable management and harnessing of ocean resources requires technological organisational infrastructure as well as an equally robust one encompassing the life sciences, the social sciences, and the even arts. This calls for the creation and maintenance of a regional ecosystem of academic institutions, research centres, maritime universities, professional training establishments, etc. It also calls for an enduring network of thinktanks, academia, and government structures. IPRD-2026 will determine how best existing regional academic networks, including those associated, *inter alia*, with IORA, ASEAN, FIPIC, etc., might be strengthened and which new networks and frameworks should be established for academic exchange, outcome-driven joint research, and technology-transfer partnerships to produce the competent human capital in the region.

Through the aforementioned specific deliverables, IPRD-2026 would provide a substantive and forward-looking agenda through which the world's leading academicians, practitioners, scientists, technologists, strategists, and policymakers can collectively address this facet of the IPOI. In keeping with the tradition firmly established by previous editions, deliberations of this international conference will concentrate upon the identification of specific, actionable measures at national, sub-regional, and pan-regional levels, which could thereafter be addressed through extant mechanisms for bilateral, trilateral, and plurilateral structures designed to promote comity, cooperation, and collaboration across the Indo-Pacific.



SPEAKER PROFILES & ABSTRACTS

(In alphabetical order of first names)

COMMODORE ABHINAV BARVE

Commodore (Naval Oceanology and Meteorology),
Naval Headquarters, New Delhi



Commodore Abhinav D Barve was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 21 February 1992. An Electrical Engineer from Shivaji University, Kolhapur, he holds postgraduate qualifications in Atmospheric Science from the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) and Defence Studies from the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, as well as a Master of Management Studies from the College of Defence Management, Secunderabad. He has received commendations from the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command, in 1997 and the Chief of the Naval Staff in 2005.

Commodore Barve assumed charge as Commodore Naval Oceanology & Meteorology on 20 January 2023. Over his distinguished career, he has held diverse appointments, including Instructor at INS *Mandovi*, Command Meteorological Officer and Public Relations Officer at Andaman and Nicobar Command and Headquarters Western Naval Command, Directing Staff at the College of Defence Management, and Head of Faculty and Registrar at the Indian Naval Academy, Ezhimala.

He has conceptualised and led several transformative initiatives in the Navy's Meteorological and Oceanographic (METOC) domain, strengthening indigenous capabilities, operational efficiency and decision support. These include INDRA, the Navy's mobile-based weather application, and indigenous GIS applications such as Panorama 3.0, ShipMet and MAUSM 2.0. He also facilitated MOSDAC-IN, integrating satellite and IMD Doppler weather radar products on a common platform for naval air stations. Through strategic collaborations, including the Navy's first MoU with IMD, he has advanced customised decision-support systems, specialised training and participation in the Ministry of Earth Sciences' Mission MAUSAM. His initiatives have also strengthened METOC training, supported efforts towards World Meteorological Organization Regional Training Centre recognition, and promoted expertise in space weather and operational oceanography — enhancing the integration of meteorological and oceanographic information into naval operational decision-making.

MS AISHA RASYIDILA KUSUMASOMANTRI

Co-Director for Partnership and External Engagement,
and Head of Government Task Force,
Indo-Pacific Strategic Intelligence (ISI),
Indonesia



Aisha Rasyidila Kusumasomantri (Aira) is an international security scholar specialising in Indo-Pacific strategic studies, military affairs, modern warfare and intelligence. She holds a degree in International Relations from Universitas Indonesia and a postgraduate degree in Global Security from the University of Glasgow, and serves as a lecturer at the State Intelligence College. She has collaborated with Indonesia's ministries of Foreign Affairs, Development and Planning, and Defence on security policy, contributes expert analysis to defence and security discourse, and serves as Co-Director of Cooperation and External Engagement at ISI.

ABSTRACT

Downstreaming Maritime Knowledge: Building an Outcome-Driven India-Indonesia Research Network

The growing India-Indonesia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership presents an important opportunity to deepen maritime cooperation through sustained knowledge exchange, institutional collaboration, and policy-oriented research. Recent developments, including the strengthening of bilateral defence cooperation and renewed attention to the Andaman-Aceh Corridor, demonstrate political commitment to a more substantive maritime partnership. The challenge now is to translate these commitments into implementable initiatives supported by research and evidence-based policy recommendations. This presentation argues that an outcome-driven network connecting Indonesian think tanks, universities, government agencies, and professional military education (PME) institutions in India offers a practical mechanism for bridging the gap between strategic ambition and implementation. Highlighting institutional partnership between the National Maritime Foundation (NMF) and Indo-Pacific Strategic Intelligence (ISI) as a case study, it examines how Track 1.5 and Track 2 cooperation can complement official diplomacy and operational defence engagement. Two priority areas for sustained research cooperation will be highlighted: first, maritime domain awareness, and resilience across the Andaman-Aceh Corridor; and second, maritime defence-industrial technologies and human-capital development that are downstreamed from both countries cooperation. The central proposition is that sustainable maritime cooperation requires not only political agreements and operational engagement, but also an enduring intellectual infrastructure capable of converting shared strategic interests into practical regional outcomes.

COMMODORE (DR) ARUN P GOLAYA, IN (RETD)

VSM

Former OiC Technology Development Acceleration Cell, Indian Navy

Mentor Innovation, Chakra Dialogues Foundation

Visiting Faculty at SSIFS & SME / Advisor to UPSC



Commodore (Dr) Arun Golaya was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 1 January 1992 and retired on 31 March 2024 after over three decades of service. He commanded three ships, including INS *Nireekshak*, and was awarded the Vishisht Seva Medal (VSM) in 2012. As a founding member of the Directorate of Net Centric Operations, he served for eight years at the National Security Council Secretariat (2012–2020), contributing to the establishment of its Technology Wing. An accomplished writer and analyst, he authored The Game Changer and was the second recipient of the National Maritime Foundation's Admiral AK Chatterji Research Fellowship.

In 2020, Commodore Golaya became the founding Officer-in-Charge of the Technology Development Acceleration Cell under the Naval Innovation and Indigenisation Organisation, spearheading initiatives including SPRINT and Swavlamban. Recognised by Rashtriya Raksha University as Chief Advisor Defence Innovation, he now serves as Mentor – Innovation at Chakra Dialogues Foundation, Visiting Faculty at SSIFS, and Subject Matter Expert (SME) and Advisor to UPSC. He continues to support defence startups, advise venture capital funds, and mentor innovators, contributing to India's defence innovation ecosystem and nation-building initiatives.

ABSTRACT

Operationalising Navy-to-Navy Cooperation for the Responsible Adoption of Dual-Use Maritime Technologies in the Indo-Pacific

Emerging technologies such as AI-enabled autonomous systems, quantum sensors and communications, and digital ocean twins are transforming maritime security and the blue economy. However, unequal access to research, infrastructure, and technological capabilities risks widening the divide between technologically advanced nations and smaller coastal and island states. These disparities could limit maritime domain awareness, weaken the protection of critical infrastructure, and increase dependence on external providers. The dual-use nature of these technologies further complicates the challenge, as innovations supporting commercial shipping, environmental monitoring, and search-and-rescue can also enable military surveillance, targeting, and cyber threats.

Inclusive regional cooperation is essential to ensure these technologies strengthen collective maritime resilience rather than reinforce existing inequalities. Joint maritime domain awareness initiatives, shared data standards, collaborative research into quantum security, and multi-country academic and industry partnerships can help smaller states develop technological capacity. Common guidelines for civilian and military applications, alongside regular technical dialogues, can promote responsible innovation while managing security risks. Such practical partnerships are vital to building a more equitable, secure, and resilient Indo-Pacific maritime order.

PROFESSOR (DR) ATHAULLA A RASHEED

Head, Centre for Security and Strategic Studies (CSSS),
The Maldives National University (MNU),
Maldives



Dr Athaulla ('Atho') Ahmed Rasheed is Head of the Centre for Security and Strategic Studies at The Maldives National University. His research focuses on small-state security, climate governance and Indo-Pacific maritime strategy, with particular emphasis on scientific, environmental and strategic cooperation across the region. He holds dual PhDs from the Australian National University (2024), specialising in small states' national and climate security, and the University of Queensland (2013). He is the author of *Small States Maritime Security: The Indo-Pacific Strategy for Maldives* (2025) and has published extensively on the ocean-climate-security nexus, climate diplomacy and regional security frameworks.

Dr Rasheed brings substantial diplomatic and policymaking experience, having served as State Minister in the Government of Maldives, Additional Secretary and Head of International Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and in various diplomatic roles. He has also advised the Australian Department of Defence and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on Indian Ocean security. A frequent contributor to regional strategic dialogues, he has participated in forums including the Indo-Pacific Environmental Security Conference, the Indo-Pacific Sea Power Conference and the Pathfinder Indian Ocean Security Conference.

ABSTRACT

From NMF–SSSS Cooperation to a Wider Indian Ocean Academic Network for Maritime and Security Research

Maldives' maritime security cooperation is a central pillar of its national security and foreign policy, reinforced through its bilateral relationship with India and wider regional engagements. Within this context, maritime data points and structured knowledge development have become essential for strengthening responsive regional frameworks. Institutions such as the National Maritime Foundation (NMF) in India and The Maldives National University's School of Security and Strategic Studies (SSSS) now serve as key contributors of policy-guiding data. The Memorandum of Understanding between NMF and MNU represents a proactive academic partnership capable of generating shared research outputs and informing national and regional maritime priorities.

This collaboration is particularly significant given the rising threats of IUU fishing and transnational crimes such as drug trafficking, which have reached not only our ocean territories, but also our shores and lands. Academic institutions can help overcome constraints that governments often face in responding rapidly, flexibly, or comprehensively to such challenges. Over the next two years, SSSS will work with NMF experts across Maldives, India, and the region to examine maritime data points, critical infrastructure, and hydrographic information that can shape mutual policy development. The MOU translates intent into action by enabling shared best practices, targeted policy inputs, and contributions to Track 1.5 and Track 2 processes feeding into regional mechanisms such as the Colombo Security Conclave, IONS, SASEC, IORA, and CDRI's IRIS programme.

VICE ADMIRAL BISWAJIT DASGUPTA, IN (RETD)

PVSM, AVSM, YSM, VSM

National Maritime Security Coordinator



Vice Admiral Biswajit Dasgupta is a former Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Navy's Eastern Naval Command and is currently the National Maritime Security Coordinator (NMSC) at the National Security Council Secretariat, New Delhi.

An alumnus of the National Defence Academy, the Defence Services Command and Staff College (Bangladesh), the Army War College and the National Defence College, his 38 years in the Indian Navy include 15 years in senior- and apex-leadership positions.

He commanded four frontline warships, including the aircraft carrier, INS *Viraat*, in addition to tenanting key staff and training appointments.

As a Flag Officer, he headed the Operations Division at the Western Naval Command, Mumbai and commanded the Eastern Fleet at Visakhapatnam. He has been the Additional Director General of the NCC and the Controller of Personnel Services at Naval Headquarters. He was also the Chief of Staff of the Eastern Naval Command before being elevated as its Commander-in-Chief.

Vice Admiral Dasgupta is the recipient of four distinguished service awards by the President of India for his contribution to naval operations, maritime affairs and strategic management in the Indian Navy.

He is a regular speaker at military colleges, academic institutions, youth forums, conferences and dialogues.

As the National Maritime Security Coordinator, he is mandated to provide apex-level guidance and coordinate all aspects of maritime security among its multifarious stakeholders.

MS CHERYL RITA KAUR

Research Fellow and Head, Centre for Straits of Malacca,
Maritime Institute of Malaysia (MIMA),
Malaysia



Cheryl Rita is a Fellow and Head of the Centre for Straits of Malacca. Her research and consultancy focus has been extensive, particularly in ocean governance, natural resources, marine protected areas management, and marine pollution at national, regional, and international platforms.

Among her experiences include an attachment to the government Centre for Environment, Fisheries, and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) in Lowestoft, UK, for research on spatially managed areas, an Asian Conservation Fellowship award from the Earthwatch Institute of Australia, the JICA Programme for Young Leaders in Japan, Visiting Scientist at the Academia Sinica in Taipei, and country representative under the International Leadership Programme to the US on Coastal and Marine Management for emerging leaders.

She has several certifications under her belt, and is currently an Associate Fellow at the Institute of Oceanography and Environment (INOS) of University Malaysia Terengganu, and served as an Adjunct Lecturer at the China-ASEAN College of Marine Sciences, Xiamen University Malaysia, on integrated coastal zone management.

ABSTRACT

A Collaborative Blueprint for Translating Ocean Science into Policy

The increasing complexity of maritime activities, interconnected marine ecosystems and transboundary environmental challenges necessitates integrated and collaborative ocean governance through blue economy policies. Marine spatial planning (MSP), supported by big data and digital technologies, provides an important mechanism for translating ocean science into evidence-based policies and sustainable marine management. Regional cooperation is essential to strengthen the science-policy interface through research partnerships, shared marine observation systems, interoperable geospatial databases, scientific assessments and stakeholder engagement. Platforms such as ASEAN and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) can facilitate knowledge exchange, capacity building and collaborative monitoring while respecting national jurisdictions.

For Malaysia, its strategic position between the Straits of Malacca, the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea offers opportunities to advance regional blue economy priorities. Aligning ecosystem-based MSP, digital technologies and inclusive stakeholder participation with Malaysia's Blue Economy Blueprint 2026–2040 can strengthen evidence-based marine governance and regional cooperation. This presentation will examine MIMA's work in these areas and explore opportunities to formalise cooperation with the National Maritime Foundation (NMF) to address shared priorities.

MS CORINNE JULIE

Project Manager, Nature Seychelles,
Mahé, Seychelles



Corinne Julie is the Project Manager for Nature Seychelles' Blue Economy and Climate Change: Risk Assessment and Adaptive Strategies for Improved Seaport Resilience to Climate Change in Seychelles project, implemented in partnership with the Seychelles Port Authority, with technical support from the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and the National Maritime Foundation. Her work focuses on assessing climate-related risks to seaport infrastructure to strengthen the resilience of Seychelles' port sector.

Prior to her current role, she served as Technical Manager for Nature Seychelles, managing internationally donor-funded initiatives from the European Union and the German Federal Government, focused on wetland conservation, climate adaptation, environmental governance and equitable management of protected areas. Her experience includes project coordination, stakeholder engagement, and community-based conservation.

As an environmental educator with over 10 years' experience working with youth and local people, Ms Julie has worked towards fostering a closer connection between people and their natural environment.

Ms Julie holds a Master's in Sustainability and Management from Royal Holloway, University of London.

ABSTRACT

From Wetlands to Maritime Resilience: Lessons in Cooperation

Climate resilience is not built by one organisation working alone. It depends on bringing together local knowledge, technical expertise, government partners and sustained partnerships, and on turning information into concrete action. This presentation draws on the EU-funded Wetlands of Hope initiative, in which Nature Seychelles worked with the Ministry of Environment, Climate, Energy and Natural Resources, private-sector partners and local people to improve wetland management, building on earlier co-management work in marine national parks.

The presentation explores how cooperation works in practice, how local experience can inform wider decisions, and how the approach could be adapted to the maritime sector. It draws on site assessments, a shared monitoring application, partnership agreements and a reviewed and updated National Wetlands Policy and Action Plan, and considers what made them work. Rather than transferring a wetland project to the maritime sector, the presentation identifies lessons on partnership, local monitoring and shared responsibility, which smaller States and organisations could adapt without duplicating existing initiatives. It proposes a staged approach that builds capacity and leaves partners to take the work forward, learning from what continues before further funding is sought, and a cooperation plan with timelines and indicators of progress.

VICE ADMIRAL DARIO GIACOMIN, ITN (RETD)

Senior Vice President (Underwater), Fincantieri,
Rome, Italy



Vice Admiral Dario Giacomin (Retd) graduated from the Italian Naval Academy in 1984 and built a distinguished career spanning submarine command, naval leadership and defence strategy. A submariner by training and passion, he commanded several submarines, including the *Mocenigo*, *Dandolo* and *Longobardo*, as well as the frigate *Grecale* and aircraft carrier *Giuseppe Garibaldi*. He served in senior roles across the Italian Navy and Joint Defence Staff, as Deputy National Armament Director, and as Italy's Military Representative to the NATO and EU Military Committees. A key contributor to Italy's submarine modernisation, he initiated the programme for four U212 Near Future submarines. Following his retirement in June 2025, he joined Fincantieri's Underwater Hub, where he continues to focus on the future of submarines — his first love.

ABSTRACT

Securing the Undersea Domain in the Indo-Pacific
Fincantieri and the National Maritime Foundation (NMF) are encouraged to develop an India–Italy cooperation roadmap to protect critical undersea infrastructure through science, technology, industrial partnerships and academic collaboration.

- Ecosystem-based security: Combine the capabilities of governments, navies, industry, academia, research institutions and infrastructure owners, drawing on Italy's National Underwater Hub and European cooperation.
- Technology and partnerships: Explore Fincantieri's DEEP system, integrating mission management, unmanned underwater vehicles and fibre-optic detection, through open architectures and collaboration with Indian research and industrial partners.
- India–Italy cooperation mechanism: Establish a Fincantieri–NMF working group and an India–Italy Undersea Dialogue, bringing together governments, navies, universities, laboratories, companies and infrastructure operators for twice-yearly meetings.
- Inspection and repair priorities: Pilot repeated inspections of a cable-landing corridor near Versova, Mumbai, combining Italian technologies with Indian expertise in acoustics, oceanography and operational control. Advance plans for an India-built cable repair capability and a regional Indian Ocean repair hub.
- Phased implementation and accountability: By 2028, target joint sea trials, researcher exchanges, specialised training and a repair-readiness study. Over five years, develop a sustained pilot programme, annual readiness exercises and a potential vessel-build decision, with progress reviewed every six months.

The long-term objective is to strengthen Indo-Pacific resilience by reducing the time required to detect, attribute and repair damage to critical undersea infrastructure, while embedding cooperation within the Science, Technology and Academic Cooperation pillar of the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative.

PROFESSOR (DR) DEO FLORENCE ONDA

Research Professor, The Marine Science Institute,
University of the Philippines,
Philippines



Professor (Dr) Deo Florence Onda is a Research Professor IV and UP Scientist III at the Marine Science Institute, University of the Philippines Diliman. He specialises in microbial oceanography, marine biotechnology, harmful algal blooms, and marine plastics pollution. He holds a PhD in Oceanography from Université Laval, Canada, and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Germany's Alfred Wegener Institute for Polar and Marine Research.

Professor Onda leads multidisciplinary research and advances science-policy engagement, marine environmental protection, and scientific capacity-building. His work includes marine scientific cooperation among island states in the Sulu-Sulawesi-Timor region and strengthening responses to marine plastics pollution. He chairs the Plastics Research Network–Philippines and has received the 2024 DOST Gawad Agham Balik Scientist Achievement Award and recognition as a 2025 The Outstanding Young Men (TOYM) honoree.

ABSTRACT

Archipelagic Leadership: Leveraging the Philippines' Experiences in Advancing Maritime Security, Scientific Cooperation, and Regional Resilience in the Indo-Pacific

The evolving Indo-Pacific security landscape highlights the need for stronger regional partnerships and institutional capacities to address maritime challenges. Strategically located between the Pacific Ocean and Southeast Asia, the Philippines can leverage its archipelagic experience, scientific expertise, and institutional capabilities to advance maritime governance, environmental resilience, and sustainable development, particularly among developing countries and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Drawing on Philippine experiences in marine scientific research, maritime governance, biodiversity conservation, and transboundary environmental monitoring, the presentation explores opportunities for South–South cooperation, science diplomacy, and strategic partnerships. It examines challenges in marine research between archipelagic and non-archipelagic states and proposes mechanisms such as joint scientific expeditions, training programmes, technology co-development, and knowledge-sharing platforms. Particular attention is given to India–Philippines cooperation and partnerships with SIDS to strengthen maritime domain awareness, evidence-based governance, and regional resilience, contributing to a more secure, cooperative, and inclusive Indo-Pacific.

ADMIRAL DINESH K TRIPATHI, IN (RETD)

PVSM, AVSM, NM

Former Chief of the Naval Staff

and Chairman, National Maritime Foundation



Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi assumed command as the 26th Chief of the Naval Staff from Apr 2024 until May 2026. Prior to this appointment, he was the Vice Chief of the Naval Staff.

He completed his schooling from Sainik School Rewa, and thereafter joined the prestigious National Defence Academy. He was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 01 Jul 1985 and specialised in Communication and Electronic Warfare. His command assignments include command of INS *Vinash* (Missile Vessel), INS *Kirch* (Missile Corvette), and INS *Trishul* (Guided Missile Frigate). Whilst in command of INS *Kirch*, he played a pivotal role during HADR operations after the Tsunami of December 2004, for which he received a letter of appreciation from the then President of Sri Lanka.

The Admiral is an alumnus of the Defence Service Staff College, Wellington, the College of Naval Warfare and the Naval Command College at the US Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, where he won the prestigious Robert E Bateman International Prize. He holds an MPhil from Mumbai University and is currently pursuing a PhD on the topic "Effective Cooperative Maritime Security Framework for the Indian Ocean Region: Imperatives, and Challenges".

His other sea-going appointments include Executive Officer of INS Mumbai (Guided Missile Destroyer), Fleet Electronic Warfare Officer, Fleet Communication Officer and also the Fleet Operations Officer (akin to the Chief of Staff to the Fleet Commander) of the Western Fleet. His staff appointments include the Director of Naval Operations (DNO), Principal Director of Network Centric Operations (PDNCO), and Principal Director Naval Plans (PDNP).

After his promotion to the Flag Rank, he held several important appointments such as the Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Policy and Plans), Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet, Commandant of the prestigious Indian Naval Academy, Director General of Naval Operations, Chief of Personnel and the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief Western Naval Command.

Adm Dinesh K Tripathi is a recipient of the Param Vishisht Seva Medal, Ati Vishisht Seva Medal, and Nao Sena Medal for devotion to duty. A keen sportsman who avidly follows tennis, badminton, and cricket, he is also a dedicated student of international relations, military history, and leadership. Currently, he is the incumbent Chairman of the National Maritime Foundation (NMF), New Delhi.

MS DONGYOUN CHO

Senior Fellow for Advanced Technologies, National Security and Defence,
The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) - Europe,
Berlin, Germany



Dongyoun Cho is a Senior Fellow for Advanced Technologies, National Security and Defence at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS–Europe), based in Berlin. Her research examines how emerging technologies, particularly quantum technologies and artificial intelligence, are reshaping defence policy, deterrence, alliance dynamics and security governance across Europe and the Indo-Pacific. She also develops frameworks for governing dual-use technologies and strategic technology supply chains.

Previously, she was a Senior Researcher in the Security and Technology Programme at the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) in Geneva, where she led the Innovations Dialogue and contributed to UN processes, including the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems. She is also an Assistant Professor in the Department of Military Studies at Seokyeong University, Seoul, currently on leave.

Before entering academia and policy research, Dongyoun served for 16 years as an intelligence officer in the Republic of Korea Army, retiring as a Major. She is a Maurice R. Greenberg World Fellow at Yale University and holds a Master in Public Administration from Harvard Kennedy School.

ABSTRACT

AI and Quantum Technologies in the Maritime Domain: A Practical Framework for Indo-Pacific Cooperation

Advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and quantum technologies are often discussed together as transformative for the maritime domain, yet they sit at very different stages of development. This presentation first sets out what is already fielded, what is in credible development and what remains aspirational across both fields, drawing on recent technical assessments rather than strategic narratives and distinguishing the maturity of individual sensors from the maturity of the systems and doctrine needed to use them. It then addresses the dual-use dilemma that shapes any cooperation: how to work together without either accelerating an unregulated competition or adopting control regimes that exclude developing maritime nations. On that basis it proposes a three-to-five-year framework organised by function rather than by area of cooperation. It asks which tasks, from shared standards for AI-enabled maritime domain awareness to confidence-building measures for autonomous systems at sea, are suited to multilateral or minilateral cooperation, which are likely to remain national, and which existing regional structures could host each. It closes with the competencies regional navies and maritime agencies need to be intelligent consumers of these technologies, and with indicators against which progress could be measured.

MR EMMANUEL KOUBARAKIS

Chargé d'affaires a.i., Embassy of Greece



Emmanuel Koubarakis is a career diplomat currently serving as Minister Counsellor and Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Greece in New Delhi, India. With two decades of experience across bilateral diplomacy, international organizations, and diplomatic administration, he plays a key role in advancing strategic ties, policy dialogues, and cross-border cooperation between Greece, Europe, and South Asia.

He established his academic and legal foundation at the Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne in Paris, France, where he earned a Bachelor of Laws (1997–2001) and a Master's Degree in European Union Law (2001–2002). His background in European Union law and multilateral legal frameworks underpins his work in international governance, academic engagement, and institutional collaboration.

His diplomatic career began in 2006 following his training at the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Athens. He initially served in the Ministry's Directorate for Justice, Home Affairs, Migration and Schengen, followed by a posting to the Permanent Mission of Greece to the OSCE in Vienna, Austria (2008–2010), during which he contributed to the 2009 Greek OSCE Chairmanship. Returning to Athens, he held key administrative and policy positions, including in the Office of the Secretary General (2010–2012) and the Directorate for Personnel and Administrative Organization (2012–2013).

Mr Koubarakis has represented Greece across several key international postings, serving as Consul at the Consulate General of Greece in New York (2013–2017) and Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Greece in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (2017–2019). He subsequently served in Athens as Director of the Diplomatic Cabinet of the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for Diaspora Greeks (2019–2021), steering international engagement with global diaspora networks, before serving as Consul General of Greece in Chicago, USA (2021–2026).

In his current role in New Delhi, Mr Koubarakis focuses on expanding diplomatic partnerships, regional engagement, and institutional exchanges across South Asia and the wider Indo-Pacific. Fluent in English and French, he actively promotes multilateral dialogue, legal frameworks, and academic and technical cooperation linking Europe and the Indo-Pacific region.

DR EVA PEJSOVA

Japan Chair, Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy,
Brussels School of Governance (BSoG),
Belgium



Eva Pejsova is Japan Chair at the Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy (CSDS) of the Brussels School of Governance (BSoG) and Associate Fellow at the French "Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique" (FRS). Until 2019, Dr Pejsova was in charge of the Asia portfolio at the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), the EU's official agency for foreign and security policy research and analysis.

She holds a PhD in Strategic Studies from the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) in Singapore and has previously worked with the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the French Prime Minister's Office, the OECD and the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF).

Dr Pejsova lectures at SciencesPo (Paris School of International Affairs) in Paris, the Geneva Centre for Security Studies (GCSP), as well as briefs the Members of the European Parliament. She is a member of the CSCAP EU Committee and the Europe-India Research and Dialogue Network (EIRDN).

Her research focuses on security and defence dynamics in the Indo-Pacific, EU-Asia relations, Japan's foreign and security policy, maritime security, as well as broader issues related to good ocean governance.

ABSTRACT

Building EU–Indo-Pacific Cooperation Mechanisms for Responsible Governance of Dual-Use Maritime Technologies

From the Black Sea to the Red Sea and the Strait of Hormuz, cheap commercial drones, satellite imagery, AI-enabled surveillance and GNSS interference are transforming the maritime security environment, lowering the cost of coercion and blurring the line between civilian and military activity. The same technologies also offer smaller coastal states a chance to close capability gaps, giving them unprecedented and affordable maritime domain awareness over their waters, resources and critical infrastructure. What lags behind is governance.

Maritime security is one of the longest-standing and most advanced strands of EU-India cooperation. With the Security and Defence Partnership concluded in January 2026, Brussels and New Delhi now have unique political momentum to shape the governance of dual-use maritime technologies together, rather than inherit rules written by others. The presentation will examine relevant EU instruments, such as export controls, the AI Act and research-security measures, assessing their strengths and limitations, as well as their applicability in the Indo-Pacific context. It will discuss the most suitable bilateral and multilateral avenues, exploring a possible division of labour among key regional maritime stakeholders without duplicating efforts or forcing smaller states to choose sides. Finally, it will suggest concrete ideas for further advancement, such as a shared taxonomy of dual-use maritime technologies or joint pilots for their responsible use.

REAR ADMIRAL GUNINDER S JAWANDA, IN (RETD)

Former Director-General, Weapons and Electronics Systems Engineering Establishment (WESEE),
Founder and CEO, Mystic Works LLP,
New Delhi



Rear Admiral Guninder Singh Jawanda (Retd) is a distinguished defence technologist, systems architect, and Founder of Mystic Works LLP. An alumnus of Cranfield University, UK, and a Fellow of the IETE, he concluded a 35-year naval career as Director General of the Weapons and Electronics Systems Engineering Establishment (WESEE)—the Indian Navy's premier indigenous technology incubator.

Across three decades of operational service and platform engineering—spanning surface combatants and strategic submarine programmes—he has bridged the critical divide between grand operational strategy and deterministic systems engineering. Under his leadership, Mystic Works delivers mission-critical architectures across the full operational continuum, from seabed to space.

His core specialisation centres on Integrated mission systems, secure multi-domain datalinks, and edge-first, AI-enabled autonomy for manned and unmanned teaming. A recognised authority on contested sub-sea warfare technology and assured PNT in GPS-denied environments, he pairs senior operational experience with deep systems-engineering expertise to translate cutting-edge science and international cooperation into decisive sovereign capability.

MR HIDESHI TOKUCHI

President, Research Institute for Peace and Security (RIPS), Tokyo, Japan



Mr Hideshi Tokuchi served as Japan's first-ever Vice-Minister of Defense for International Affairs from 2014 to 2015 after completing several senior assignments in the Ministry of Defense, including Director-General of the Defense Policy Bureau, the Budget and Equipment Bureau, the Personnel and Education Bureau, and the Operations Bureau.

He has been the President of the Research Institute for Peace and Security (RIPS), an independent think-tank in Tokyo, since 2021. He taught security issues at several universities in Japan. He often writes and speaks about Japan's national security policy.

He earned his Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of Tokyo in 1979, and his Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy (MALD) degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1986.

COMMODORE JAI BEDI, IN

Executive Director, National Maritime Foundation (NMF)



Commodore Jai Bedi, commissioned into the Indian Navy on 1 July 1994, is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Naval War College, Goa, and National Defence College, Bangladesh. He has held a range of command, staff and instructional appointments, including faculty roles at the Navigation Direction School and Defence Services Staff College. He holds four master's degrees across science, social science and philosophy, and has qualified the UGC-NET as an Associate Professor of Defence and Strategic Studies.

ADMIRAL JAYANTHA PERERA, SLN (RETD)

RWP, VSV, USP

Former Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy

Group Consultant (Marine), McLarens Group and GAC Group, Sri Lanka



As the 19th Sri Lanka Navy Commander, possessing thirty-seven years of military experience, Admiral Jayantha Perera is an expert in the area of maritime defence and wishes to remain constantly associated with defence and maritime affairs both locally and internationally. As a professional aptly qualified in a myriad of military disciplines, which particularly capture the aspects of safeguarding maritime boundaries and enforcing principles of good governance in the ethical conduct of oceanic affairs, he was duly able to rise to the upper echelon of his military career, by being appointed as the 19th Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy in the year 2014.

Having obtained his first Master of Science degree in Defence Studies from the University of Madras, his military inspirations further fuelled him to pursue his career interests as a charismatic officer in the Sri Lanka Navy, where he was able to successfully complete his second Master of Science degree in Defence and Strategic Studies at the National Defence University of Islamabad, Pakistan.

Before attaining the honour of being appointed as the 19th Sri Lanka Navy Chief, Admiral Perera also held many senior responsible naval appointments, where he was able to secure the glorious opportunity of becoming the first Commanding Officer of the SLN Flag Ship Sayura in 2000. The exemplary service rendered by him towards protecting the motherland has made him walk past milestones of victory by becoming a recipient of several gallantry medals, which were awarded for the acts of bravery performed both on the battlefield and at sea. Upon retirement as the Navy Chief, he was appointed to serve in the capacity of Advisor to the President on Maritime affairs in 2015 and was subsequently able to execute duties as a member of the Presidential Task Force for the prevention of the spread of COVID-19 within the military forces and the prisons.

At present, while extending much-valued services as a consultant and a board director to the Maclarence group of companies in Sri Lanka, his recent appointment as a member of the steering committee on law and order functional under the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce governance framework has enabled him to impart effortlessly on diverse platforms the knowledge and experience that he has acquired over the years of serving in various capacities as a senior naval officer.

PROFESSOR JEFFREY PAYNE

Associate Professor, The Near East South Asia (NESA) Center for Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Washington, DC, United States of America



Jeffrey Payne is an Associate Professor at the Near East South Asia (NESA) Center for Strategic Studies. He pilots the Center's maritime security programming, including its ongoing series devoted to the Indian Ocean Region and wider Indo-Pacific. In addition, he leads engagements on China's interests throughout the NESA Center area of responsibility.

Professor Payne conducts analysis on Chinese foreign policy, Indian Ocean Regional affairs, and maritime security. He is particularly interested in the intersection of maritime security and strategic competition in the Indian Ocean, as well as in how technology and information can assist in furthering security cooperation. His work informs United States Combatant Commands, the Office of the Secretary of War, and interagency efforts inside the United States government. Professor Payne takes part in United States government efforts relating to Maritime Domain Awareness and helps facilitate internal discussions across bureaucratic seams existing in the Indian Ocean. He has presented before international conclaves, security forums, and defense institutions in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia.

ABSTRACT

IPMDA Opportunities and Challenges: Practical Steps for Meaningful Information-Sharing

The importance of maritime security throughout the Indo-Pacific is increasingly recognized with established and rising actors all seeking to enhance the safety of our waters through greater information sharing. The advantage of our time is a greater number of actors seeking to enhance the safety of our waters and more substantive access to diverse information. The impediments we face, however, are creating a concert for a more diverse community that standardizes means for information sharing.

This presentation examines the necessity of hybrid maritime institutions that can translate between core communities, namely government and the private sector. Such institutions, like the National Maritime Foundation, possess convening power to gather elements of the maritime community who do not routinely collaborate. Empowering such institutions will be explored in these remarks.

The presentation concludes with a proposed roadmap, focused on the Indian Ocean Region, which highlights policy mechanisms and collaborative measures enhancing opportunities for private sector actors while complementing existing state policies. Progress towards Maritime Domain Awareness is a shared goal, one requiring adaptations that are firmly within our reach.

MR JIA BIN LIN (ISAAC)

Senior Executive Officer, Taiwan Ocean Affairs Council, Taiwan



Jia Bin (Isaac) Lin is a Senior Executive Officer in the Deputy Minister's Office at Taiwan's Ocean Affairs Council. He previously served as Section Chief in the Department of International Development (2019–2026), where he led efforts in international cooperation, strategic planning, and public relations. His career in maritime policy and governance also includes serving as Secretary in the Deputy Minister's Office, Senior Specialist in the Department of Overall Planning at the Ocean Affairs Council, and Officer/Specialist with the Taiwan Coast Guard from 2011 to 2018.

With expertise bridging maritime security, marine affairs, and international relations, Mr Lin's work focuses on international cooperation, intelligence analysis, and cultivating global human networks to address regional security concerns.

In academia, he is currently a PhD student at National Cheng Kung University. He holds a Master's degree in Marine Affairs from National Taiwan Ocean University and a Bachelor's degree in Maritime Police from National Central Police University.

ABSTRACT

An Action Plan for the Cooperative and Collaborative Sharing of Ocean Data

Understanding climate change requires sharing ocean data across borders. Currently, countries often keep their information isolated in incompatible formats, preventing effective regional teamwork.

To solve this, my presentation proposes a practical action plan to connect Taiwan and India's ocean databases. Instead of forcing countries to upload everything to one central hub, we will establish standard rules so existing national systems can communicate securely.

This collaborative approach is proven by Taiwan’s NODASS platform, which successfully united 31 domestic agencies to share marine records. We have already expanded this model internationally through joint activities. For example, Taiwan co-hosted the "Asia Cup Marine Big Data Competition" with South Korea, empowering young scientists to use shared open data to tackle marine debris and biodiversity challenges. Additionally, Taiwan is currently cooperating with US scientists to develop advanced 3D water-quality forecasting for coastal protection.

By bridging Taiwan and India, we can replicate these successful partnerships. Sharing our data and practical tools will empower communities and policymakers, ultimately building a healthier, more resilient Indo-Pacific environment.

DR JITENDRA SINGH

MBBS, MD, PhD
Hon'ble Minister of State (Independent Charge),
Ministry of Science and Technology
Hon'ble Minister of State (Independent Charge),
Ministry of Earth Sciences
Hon'ble Minister of State, Prime Minister's Office
Hon'ble Minister of State, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances,
and Pensions
Hon'ble Minister of State, Department of Atomic Energy
Hon'ble Minister of State, Department of Space



Dr Jitendra Singh is the Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Earth Sciences, as well as Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, the Department of Atomic Energy, and the Department of Space. Elected consecutively to the 16th, 17th, and 18th Lok Sabha from the Udhampur constituency in 2014, 2019, and 2024, he plays a key role in driving India's national policy across research, space exploration, atomic energy, and marine and earth sciences.

Prior to entering public service, Dr Singh was a distinguished medical academic, Professor of Medicine, Diabetes, and Endocrinology, and a renowned specialist of international repute. He holds an MBBS from Stanley Medical College, Chennai, an MD in Medicine with a Fellowship in Diabetes from AIIMS, New Delhi, and is a Fellow of the Indian College of Physicians (FICP) as well as a Member of the National Academy of Medical Sciences (MNAMS).

Dr Singh has made extensive contributions to medical literature and academic research, authoring five books, monographs published by Elsevier, and over a dozen textbook chapters for postgraduate medical studies. His pioneering scientific work on stress diabetes was published in the International Journal of Diabetes in Developing Countries and acknowledged by the World Health Organization (WHO). He has served as Chairman of the National Scientific Committee for the Research Society for the Study of Diabetes in India (RSSDI), Joint Secretary of Diabetes in Pregnancy Study India (DIPSI), an advisor on the panel of Elsevier Publishers, and an examiner and inspector for the Medical Council of India.

A widely published author and intellectual who has contributed thousands of articles to the press, Dr Singh is a recipient of the Gold Medal for Oration at JIPMER, the "Jamna Devi Gian Devi" Award for journalism, and the Award of Outstanding Personality. He is an invited faculty member to major scientific conferences across South Asia and internationally, promoting academic, technological, and research collaboration globally.

HIS EXCELLENCY MR JOSEL F IGNACIO

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to India,
Embassy of Philippines



His Excellency Josel Francisco Ignacio is the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Philippines to the Republic of India, with concurrent non-resident accreditation to the Kingdom of Bhutan and Nepal. A career diplomat with nearly three decades of service since joining the Foreign Service of the Philippines in 1997, he plays a pivotal role in advancing bilateral relations, strategic dialogues, and regional partnerships across South Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from the University of the Philippines, Diliman, and a Bachelor of Arts Classical in Philosophy from the San Carlos Seminary in Makati, Metro Manila. Prior to his diplomatic career, he served as a Trade and Industry Development Specialist at the Philippine Department of Trade and Industry.

His background in multilateral governance and international technology policy includes serving as the Alternate Representative to the United Nations in Vienna, where his portfolio encompassed the peaceful uses of outer space, transnational organized crime, and corruption. At the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila, he served as Director of the Social and Cultural Affairs Division and Acting Director of the Human Rights Division within the Office of UN and International Organization Affairs, overseeing multilateral programs, social affairs, and international organizational cooperation.

Ambassador Ignacio has held key strategic postings across major Indo-Pacific diplomatic hubs, including serving as Consul General of the Philippines in Shanghai (2021–2024), Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Office of Asian and Pacific Affairs (2018–2021), and Minister and Head of the Political Section at the Philippine Embassy in Tokyo, Japan (2012–2018). As Director for Northeast Asia at the Department of Foreign Affairs, he managed diplomatic portfolios covering Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, having previously served as Special Assistant for Policy on the Presidential Commission on the Philippines-U.S. Visiting Forces Agreement.

A seasoned diplomat and linguist, Ambassador Ignacio is fluent in Tagalog and English, holds certification in Japanese, and possesses working knowledge of Mandarin Chinese and German. Across his postings, he has consistently championed multilateral engagement, cross-border academic and technical exchanges, and strategic cooperation across East, South, and Southeast Asia.

ADMIRAL KARAMBIR SINGH, IN (RETD)

PVSM, AVSM

Former Chief of the Naval Staff

Distinguished Chair, Naval War College



Admiral Karambir Singh was India's 24th Chief of the Naval Staff from 31 May 2019 to 30 November 2021. He was formerly the chairman of the National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi, a position he assumed on 17 January 2022.

The Admiral was commissioned into the Indian Navy in July 1980. He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla, the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, and the College of Naval Warfare, Mumbai. A Naval aviator, he earned his wings in 1981 as a helicopter pilot and has flown extensively on the Chetak (Alouette Mk III) and several variants of Kamov helicopters.

He has commanded the Indian Coast Guard Ship *Chandbibi*, the guided-missile corvette INS *Vijaydurg*, and two of the Indian Navy's frontline guided-missile destroyers, namely, INS *Rana* and INS *Delhi*. He has also held seagoing appointments, including those of Fleet Operations Officer of the Western Fleet.

On promotion to flag rank, the Admiral served as the Chief of Staff of the Eastern Naval Command. He has also held other important flag appointments such as the Chief of Staff of the Tri-Services Unified Command in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and the Flag Officer Commanding Maharashtra and Gujarat Naval Area (FOMAG).

As a Vice Admiral, he was the Director-General, Project Seabird. He oversaw all aspects of the development of the Indian Navy's expansive and modern base at Karwar in India's southern state of Karnataka. He then served as the Deputy Chief of Naval Staff, and later as the Vice Chief of Naval Staff at the Naval Headquarters. He was the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command and assumed Command of the Indian Navy on 31 May 2019, serving until his retirement from active service on 30 November 2021.

MS KARUNA RANA

Founding Director, Big Ocean States Initiative (BOSI),
Port Louis, Mauritius



Karuna Rana is an award-winning social entrepreneur from Mauritius advancing a sustainable blue economy across Small Island Developing States (SIDS), or Big Ocean States (BOS). She is the Founding Director of the Big Ocean States Initiative (BOSI), which promotes equitable ocean innovation, finance, and leadership. She is leading the development of the first island-specific Blue Investment Readiness Index and a global ocean incubator dedicated to islands. She previously co-founded SYAH, the first regional organisation promoting environmental sustainability across seven African and Asian SIDS.

With over 15 years of experience across science, business, policy, and community engagement, Karuna has worked with corporations, startups, nonprofits, UN agencies, and intergovernmental organisations across Africa and the United States. A Fulbright alumna, she serves on the African UN Ocean Decade Taskforce, is a World Economic Forum Community Member, and previously edited UNEP's 5th Global Environment Outlook for Youth. She regularly contributes to high-level ocean and climate forums and international media.

ABSTRACT

A Maritime-Cooperation Roadmap for the Betterment of Indo-Pacific 'Big Ocean States'

Although small in land area, Indo-Pacific island states steward some of the world's largest maritime jurisdictions. This presentation argues that these Big Ocean States should be recognised as ocean- and climate-intelligence hubs, while addressing inequalities in access to finance, research infrastructure, and networks. Drawing on research into the blue funding gap, it introduces BOSI's Missing Beginning framework, which highlights the foundational support islands need to develop investment-ready solutions, and the Blue Investment Readiness Index (BIRI), piloted with the University of the West Indies' Five Islands Campus across six island states to assess material, human, and institutional readiness for sustainable blue investment.

Focusing on climate-resilient blue foods, marine biotechnology, and marine plastic pollution, the presentation proposes an Indo-Pacific Maritime-Cooperation Roadmap for 2027–2030. Its three pillars are BIRI as a regional readiness baseline, cross-island capacity-sharing through practitioner exchanges and shared research facilities, and the Big Ocean States Innovators Gateway (B.I.G.) to connect island innovators with expertise, partners, finance, and markets. The Roadmap also identifies opportunities for collaboration with regional intergovernmental organisations, Indian scientific institutions, the National Maritime Foundation, and the Indian Navy, in alignment with MAHASAGAR's objectives.

ADMIRAL KRISHNA SWAMINATHAN, IN

PVSM, AVSM, VSM

Chief of the Naval Staff



Admiral Krishna Swaminathan, PVSM, AVSM, VSM, assumed charge as the 27th Chief of the Naval Staff of the Indian Navy on 31 May 2026. He succeeds Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi, PVSM, AVSM, NM, who superannuated after 41 years of distinguished service.

Admiral Krishna Swaminathan was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 01 July 1987. A Communication and Electronic Warfare specialist, he has held a wide range of operational, staff and training appointments during a distinguished career spanning nearly four decades. Admiral Swaminathan's sea commands include the guided-missile vessels INS *Vidyut* and INS *Vinash*, guided-missile corvette INS *Kulish*, guided-missile destroyer INS *Mysore* and aircraft carrier INS *Vikramaditya*.

On promotion to the rank of Rear Admiral, he served as the Chief Staff Officer (Training) at Headquarters, Southern Naval Command, Kochi. He was subsequently appointed as Flag Officer Sea Training and later commanded the Western Fleet, the Sword Arm of the Indian Navy. Subsequently, he was appointed as Flag Officer Offshore Defence Advisory Group and Advisor, Offshore Security and Defence to the Government of India.

On promotion to the rank of Vice Admiral, he tenanted the appointments of Chief of Staff, Western Naval Command; and Controller Personnel Services, Chief of Personnel and Vice Chief of the Naval Staff at Naval Headquarters. Prior to assuming charge as the Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Swaminathan was the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the prestigious Western Naval Command.

He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla; Joint Services Command and Staff College, Shrivenham, United Kingdom; College of Naval Warfare, Karanja; and the United States Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island. His academic qualifications include a BSc degree from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; MSc in Telecommunications from Cochin University of Science and Technology, Kochi; MA in Defence Studies from King's College, London; MPhil in Strategic Studies from Mumbai University; and a PhD in International Studies from Mumbai University.

Admiral Krishna Swaminathan is a recipient of the Param Vishisht Seva Medal, Ati Vishisht Seva Medal and Vishisht Seva Medal for distinguished service.

HER EXCELLENCY MS MAHISHINI COLONNE

High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to India



Ms Mahishini Colonne assumed office as High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to India on 09 June 2025. A career Foreign Service Officer, she joined the Sri Lanka Foreign Service in July 1998, and most recently served as the Additional Secretary for Multilateral Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment and Tourism.

Over her career spanning more than 25 years, she has served at Sri Lanka's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York (2000–2003 and 2007–2008), as Deputy High Commissioner in India (2011–2014), and as Director at the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka (2021–2024). Her senior roles at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have included Senior Director General for Multilateral Affairs, Ocean Affairs, Environment and Climate Change; Director General of the UN and Human Rights Division; Director General of the Economic Affairs Division; and Ministry Spokesperson. She has also served as Senior Director (International Affairs) at the Ministry of Finance and as a Member of the Board of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Service.

She has represented Sri Lanka on delegations to numerous sessions of the UN General Assembly, UN Human Rights Council, meetings of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), meetings of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77, and at the bilateral level, where she has participated in the negotiation and advancement of bilateral and multilateral initiatives.

Her academic credentials include a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from the University of Pune, India; an MSc (International Relations) from the Nanyang Technological University of Singapore; and a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) from the University of London.

COMMANDER (MS) MARIANNE PÉRON-DOISE

Senior Research Fellow, co-Head of the Asia-Pacific Programme, and Director, Geopolitical Observatory of the Indo-Pacific, Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques (IRIS), France



Marianne Péron-Doise (@marianneperon) is a Paris-based geopolitical analyst. Her research interests include strategic dynamics in the Indo-Pacific, EU-Asia security relations, security and defence policies in Asia (Japan-Korean Peninsula-ASEAN-South Asia-Oceania), maritime security issues, as well as the role of the EU as a security actor and provider.

She is currently an associated Research Fellow at the French Institut des Relations Internationales et Stratégiques (IRIS), where she is Director of the Geopolitical Observatory of the Indo-Pacific. She was a Research Fellow at the French Institute for Strategic Research, Military School (IRSEM) from 2015 to 2022. Before joining IRSEM, she was a Political Advisor at the NATO Maritime Command in Northwood (UK) from 2012 to 2015. She has been a consultant for the EU maritime project CRIMARIO since 2015.

Marianne has held several positions of responsibility related to Asia in the French Ministry of Armed Forces from 2008 to 2012. She has also been a visiting fellow at the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA) and the National Institute of Defense Studies (NIDS) in Tokyo. Marianne teaches classes in Maritime Security at Sciences Po Paris and Université Catholique de Lille and regularly attends maritime international conferences.

ABSTRACT

France and the Southern Indian Ocean: Building an Academic Network for Social Science Research and Knowledge

At the crossroads of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, the Southern Indian Ocean is a strategic space where France — through La Réunion and Mayotte — is fully committed. Beyond its military and economic presence, France has a unique responsibility and opportunity to structure a sustainable academic network for social science research in the region. The objective is to federate French research institutions and universities in La Réunion and metropolitan France, with partners from the Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, Mozambique, South Africa and India, to co-produce knowledge on shared challenges: climate change, socio-environmental vulnerability and Blue Economy, security and strategic competition, cultural identities and Creolization, and governance of the maritime commons. By connecting data, fieldwork, researchers and doctoral students, such a network would position the Southern Indian Ocean as a scientific anchor in the Indo-Pacific, fostering critical, field-based social science that is essential for evidence-based public policy and regional dialogue.

The presentation will highlight how the collaborative approach and links established between the French think tank IRIS and the NMF can contribute to the gradual Implementation process of establishing such an academic and research network with a pan-oceanic perspective.

DR MARIE BOURREL-MCKINNON

Former Chief of Staff & Head of Strategic Planning Unit, International Seabed Authority



Dr Marie Bourrel-McKinnon is an international lawyer and seabed governance specialist with over 20 years of experience in international law, policy and resource geopolitics. From 2017 to 2025, she served as Chief of Staff and Head of Strategic Planning at the International Seabed Authority, advising on deep-sea mining regulations, institutional reform and stakeholder engagement, while overseeing international seabed exploration contracts. She previously advised Pacific countries on maritime delimitation, seabed minerals and regulatory frameworks. She holds a PhD in international and environmental law, has published over 30 scholarly works, and advises governments, international organisations and industry on ocean governance, resource management and the energy transition.

ABSTRACT

From Rules to Research Partnerships: Building Equitable Deep-Sea Science and Resource Governance in the Indo-Pacific

The Indo-Pacific is at the centre of deep-seabed exploration. China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Nauru, Kiribati, Tonga and the Cook Islands all sponsor International Seabed Authority (ISA) exploration contracts, while India and the Cook Islands are also developing seabed minerals within national jurisdiction. Established scientific powers sit alongside Pacific small island developing States that have chosen to participate directly. In the coming decade, the region is well placed to become the principal arena for the science, engineering and governance of this new technological frontier. Yet knowledge, technology and the capacity to use them remain unevenly shared.

A senior multilateral practitioner with twenty years in the multilateral system, including eight at the ISA, Dr Bourrel-McKinnon served latterly as Chief of Staff and Head of Strategic Planning, where she helped shape the institutional architecture supporting deep-sea science, data and knowledge generation, and capacity development. She also oversaw contract management for the 31 seabed exploration contracts and led reports on ISA's contribution to ocean science and on women in deep-sea research. She is co-editor, with Rahul Sharma of India's National Institute of Oceanography, of Navigating the Deep: Legal Regime for the 'Area' and the Future of Ocean Governance (Springer, 2026). She argues that the region's mix of actors creates an opening for South-South and triangular cooperation: joint research expeditions, shared baseline data, co-developed technology and training that leaves lasting capability in developing States. In this presentation, she will address the open questions, from data ownership to an unsettled regulatory framework, and propose practical steps for the region.

CAPTAIN MARK BLAINE, SAN (RETD)

Lecturer, Nautical Science, Faculty of Military Science and Researcher, Security Institute for Governance and Leadership in Africa (SIGLA), Stellenbosch University,
South Africa



Mark Blaine is a retired combat officer of the South African Navy with close to forty years' military experience, including command experience of various SA Navy warships. He spent four and a half years as Defence Advisor to the South African High Commission in Kenya and completed his master's degree in maritime security through Coventry University. In the period leading up to his retirement in January 2023, he lectured at the South African Military Academy.

He is currently a researcher for the Security Institute for Governance and Leadership in Africa (SIGLA) of Stellenbosch University, with his focus on African maritime security matters such as maritime governance, undersea cable networks, subsea infrastructure and cybersecurity. He consults with various international organisations and think tanks on maritime security, capacity building and external evaluations.

ABSTRACT

A Draft Cooperation Roadmap for Small and Medium Navies to Adapt Dual-Use Maritime Technologies

Maritime digitalisation and decarbonisation are reshaping the environment of navies, coast guards and law-enforcement agencies. Space-based vessel tracking, artificial intelligence, uncrewed systems and advanced sensors can strengthen maritime domain awareness, protect infrastructure, and address illegal fishing and pollution. However, small and medium navies face constraints beyond acquisition costs, including skills shortages, limited connectivity, fragmented responsibilities and dependence on external maintenance.

This presentation proposes a phased India–South Africa cooperation roadmap, prioritising satellite data, open-source vessel analytics, uncrewed systems, environmental monitoring, pooled training, common standards and shared maintenance. Lessons would extend across Africa through pilot evaluations, adaptable technical guidelines, regional training exchanges, and engagement with African Union and regional maritime mechanisms. States could adapt approaches to their operational needs, budgets and infrastructure rather than replicate a single model. Sustainable cooperation must start with operational requirements, invest in personnel and lifecycle support, and measure success through capability improvements, not equipment delivered or agreements signed.

HER EXCELLENCY MRS MAY-ELIN STENER

Ambassador of Norway to India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Bhutan



May-Elin Stener is currently Ambassador of Norway to India, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives.

Prior to taking up this position, from 2020-2023, she was the Deputy Director General of the Regional department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, covering Africa, Asia, Latin-America and the Middle East, as well as peace and reconciliation issues.

May-Elin headed the section for Horn of Africa and West-Africa between 2018-2020. She was Norway's Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations headquarter in New York (2014-2018) as well as Deputy Head of the Norwegian Embassy in Pretoria, South Africa (2007-2011).

She has worked for the Norwegian Foreign Service since 1995, and has extensive diplomatic experience multilaterally, with a focus on humanitarian affairs.

She has also been posted to the UN offices in Geneva and has headed the Section for Humanitarian Affairs in the Ministry.

She is a lawyer by training.

VICE ADMIRAL PRADEEP CHAUHAN, IN (RETD)

AVSM & Bar, VSM

Director-General, National Maritime Foundation (NMF)



An alumnus of the National Defence Academy, the Defence Services Staff College, the Naval War College, and the National Defence College, with BSc, MSc and MPhil degrees under his belt, Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan, AVSM & Bar, VSM, is currently the Director-General of the National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi, which is India's foremost resource centre for the development and advocacy of strategies for the promotion and protection of India's maritime interests.

The admiral retired on 30 November 2013 after an illustrious, rich, and varied four-decade-long career in the Executive Branch of the Indian Navy, in the course of which he has been publicly commended three times by the Hon'ble President of India.

Not one to rest on past laurels, he has remained active even after retirement and is a much sought-after thought-leader and leadership mentor. Apart from being on the visiting faculty of the higher-command establishments of all three of India's defence services, as also tri-Service establishments such as the College of Defence Management, Hyderabad, and the National Defence College, New Delhi, he has also been advising the government through his interaction with the Integrated Headquarters of the Ministry of Defence (Navy), the Ministry of External Affairs, and the National Security Council Secretariat. He is, in addition, a prolific writer with over 100 published professional articles and papers, and, a respected Adviser and Fellow of several important think-tanks.

ADMIRAL RABINDER KUMAR DHOWAN, IN (RETD)

PVSM, AVSM, YSM

Former Chief of the Naval Staff and Former Chairman, NMF

Chairperson, Society for Aerospace Maritime and Defense Studies (SAMDeS)



Admiral Rabinder Kumar Dhowan (Retd) served as the 22nd Chief of the Naval Staff of the Indian Navy, capping a distinguished naval career spanning over 42 years. As Chief of the Naval Staff, he outlined a long-term strategic vision for the Indian Navy anchored in self-reliance and indigenisation, providing a major boost to the national 'Make in India' initiative. In this role, he directly monitored the design and construction of over 40 ships and submarines across both public and private Indian shipyards. He was also instrumental in formulating and publishing the landmark strategic publication *Indian Maritime Security Strategy 2015: Ensuring Secure Seas*.

Following his retirement from active naval service in 2016, the Admiral took over as Chairman of the National Maritime Foundation (NMF), India's premier maritime think tank, steering it until May 2019. Under his leadership, he launched the Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue as an annual international conference series conducted by the NMF. His extensive strategic expertise contributed significantly to national policy formulation, including drafting the National Maritime Policy for NITI Aayog in 2018 and serving on the committee that formulated the National Policy on the Blue Economy.

In 2020, Admiral Dhowan established the Society for Aerospace Maritime and Defense Studies (SAMDeS) as its Founding Chairman. Through SAMDeS — India's key non-profit think tank for multi-disciplinary aerospace, defence, and maritime research — he has conducted international conferences and e-symposia on subjects ranging from space technologies for national defence and defence exports to regional maritime collaboration. Currently, under his leadership, SAMDeS is drafting a universally accepted Global Maritime Accord (GMA) to counter climate change and promote sustainable ocean governance under the vision "Save the Oceans for a Safe Earth".

Admiral RK Dhowan is a recipient of the Param Vishisht Seva Medal (PVSM), Ati Vishisht Seva Medal (AVSM), and Yudh Seva Medal (YSM) for distinguished service. A practitioner and promoter of fresh strategic perspectives, he participates extensively in international dialogues as a prominent voice on Indo-Pacific cooperation, regional security, and the Blue Economy.

MR RAJ MOHABEER

Officer in Charge, General Secretariat, Indian Ocean Commission (IOC),
Mauritius



An economist by profession, Mr Raj Mohabeer has held, since 2000, the post of Officer in Charge at the General Secretariat of the Indian Ocean Commission – an intergovernmental organisation of the South-West Indian Ocean Island States. Prior to this period, he was working as an economist at the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development of the Republic of Mauritius.

His portfolio includes economic cooperation, trade, regional integration and infrastructure, maritime security and blue economy – areas of intervention that span countries beyond the IOC Member States and region. He also deals with Small Island Developing States issues together with the Pacific and Caribbean regions.

Raj Mohabeer has gained extensive and deep knowledge of the region. Among the various dossiers under his responsibility, Mr Mohabeer has been promoting the Blue Economy and has spearheaded the development of a Maritime Security Architecture for the Western Indian Ocean under the MASE Programme, actively advocating for the participation of the international community to join in. He has also been the head of the Secretariat for the Contact Group Against Piracy Off the Coast of Somalia.

ABSTRACT

Maritime Situational/Domain Awareness: Science, Technology, and Interoperability

Threats to CMI are not merely accidental but may include deliberate actions requiring sophisticated response strategies, especially in view of events in the Middle East. The Western Indian Ocean (WIO) has limited capacity to address Cable security. The presentation will propose response strategies and concrete actions forward and will comprise 5 parts, including:

(i) the need to adopt (in a context of declining multilateralism) a bottom-up approach from sub-regional initiatives towards the larger Indo-Pacific region,

(ii) the need to promote exchanges and peer learning among Indo-Pacific sub-regions through IPRD to be initiated by the Indian Ocean Commission, supported and facilitated by NMF and other Indian think tanks in a sustained manner,

(iii) identification of specific and practical CMI priority areas of cooperation towards a more coherent regional approach to CMI protection,

(iv) a 2–5–year indicative action areas.

GENERAL NS RAJA SUBRAMANI

VSM, AVSM, SM, VSM (Retd)
Chief of Defence Staff
and Secretary, Department of Military Affairs



General NS Raja Subramani, PVSM, AVSM, SM, VSM (Retd) is the Chief of Defence Staff, and the Secretary to Government of India, Department of Military Affairs.

General NS Raja Subramani was also Military Adviser, National Security Council Secretariat. Prior to this, he was the Vice Chief of the Army Staff from July 01, 2024 to July 31, 2025 and was General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Central Command from March 2023 till June 2024.

The General Officer is a Graduate of the National Defence Academy and Indian Military Academy. He was commissioned into the 8th Battalion of the Garhwal Rifles on December 14, 1985. He is an alumnus of Joint Services Command Staff College, Bracknell (UK), and National Defence College, New Delhi. He holds a Master of Arts Degree from King's College London and an M Phil in Defence Studies from Madras University.

In his illustrious career spanning over 40 years, Lieutenant General NS Raja Subramani has served across a wide spectrum of conflict and terrain profiles and tenanted a host of Command, Staff and Instructional appointments. He commanded 16 Garhwal Rifles in Counter-Insurgency in Assam as part of Operation Rhino, 168 Infantry Brigade in Jammu & Kashmir and 17 Mountain Division in the Central Sector during a challenging operational environment. He also has the distinction of having commanded 2 Corps, the premier strike Corps of the Indian Army on the Western Front.

The General Officer's staff and instructional assignments include Divisional Officer at National Defence Academy, Brigade Major of a Mountain Brigade, Defence Attache in Kazakhstan, Assistant Military Secretary in the Military Secretary's Branch, Colonel General Staff (Operations) at Headquarters Eastern Command, Deputy Commander of a Rashtriya Rifles Sector in Jammu & Kashmir, Deputy Director General of Military Intelligence in the Integrated Headquarters of Ministry of Defence (Army), Brigadier General Staff (Operations) in the Eastern Command, Chief Instructor (Army) at Defence Services Staff College, Wellington and Chief of Staff, Headquarters Northern Command. The General Officer has insightful knowledge and a deep understanding of operational dynamics on both the Western and Northern Borders.

For his distinguished service, the General Officer has been awarded the Param Vishisht Seva Medal, Ati Vishisht Seva Medal, Sena Medal and Vishisht Seva Medal.

SHRI RAJESH KUMAR SINGH, IAS

Defence Secretary, Government of India



Shri Rajesh Kumar Singh, born on 24 November 1964, is an Indian Administrative Service officer of the 1989 batch from the Kerala cadre. He is currently serving as Secretary in the Ministry of Defence, Department of Defence (South Block), New Delhi, from 1 November 2024. A graduate in Economics, he has held various key positions including Secretary, Additional Chief Secretary, Chief Executive Officer, Principal Secretary to Government, C V O, Joint Secretary, Commissioner, Special Officer, Project Director, Private Secretary, District Collector, Under Secretary, and Additional Director. He is proficient in English, Hindi, and Malayalam.

PROFESSOR RAJIB SHAW

Professor, Graduate School of Media and Governance,
Keio University,
Japan



Rajib Shaw is a professor in the Graduate School of Media and Governance at Keio University, Japan. He is the co-founder of a Delhi-based social entrepreneur startup, Resilience Innovation Knowledge Academy (RIKA), and is the chair of the United Nations Asia-Pacific Scientific and Technical Advisory Group (AP-STAG) for disaster risk reduction. He is the IPCC CLA for the Asia Chapter of Working Group 2 for the 6th Assessment Report. His specialisations lie in disaster risk governance, urban resilience, climate change adaptation, and emerging technologies in disaster and climate change. He is the recipient of the Pravasi Bhartiya Samman Award (PBSA) of 2021 in the Education Sector from the President of India. He also received the United Nations Sasakawa Award for disaster risk reduction as a lifetime achievement and for his contribution to global disaster resilience initiatives in 2022. He has published 97 books and over 450 research papers. His scholarly influence is reflected by over 34,000 citations and an H-index of 87 on Google Scholar, underscoring his global leadership in disaster resilience and sustainability studies. More about his work can be seen at www.rajibshaw.org.

ABSTRACT

Building a Network of Universities in Indo-Pacific Coastal Cities for Joint Research and Human-Capital Development

Coastal cities across the Indo-Pacific face growing risks from climate change, sea-level rise, flooding and extreme weather, compounded by urbanisation and vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure. Addressing these interconnected challenges requires collaboration between scientific institutions, policymakers and coastal communities. Building on the partnership between India's National Maritime Foundation (NMF) and Keio University's India Japan Laboratory (IJL), this presentation proposes a regional network of universities and research institutions to advance collaborative research and capacity-building for climate- and disaster-resilient coastal development.

The initiative will prioritise research on systemic risks to coastal cities and ports, alongside inclusive adaptation strategies such as ecosystem restoration, resilient infrastructure and community-based disaster preparedness. Collaboration with institutions such as India's Naval War College and College of Defence Management could incorporate strategic perspectives on maritime infrastructure and climate security. Through joint research, short courses and professional training, the initiative aims to translate scientific knowledge into practical policy solutions and strengthen regional cooperation for sustainable coastal development across the Indo-Pacific.

SHRI RAJNATH SINGH

Hon'ble Raksha Mantri (Defence Minister)
Government of India



Shri Rajnath Singh was born on July 10, 1951, into a farmer's family in Babhora, District Varanasi (now District Chandauli), Uttar Pradesh (UP). He received his basic education in his hometown and later completed his MSc in Physics from Gorakhpur University, UP. He began his career as a lecturer in Physics at K.B. Post-Graduate College in Mirzapur, UP.

In 1972, he became the RSS Karyavah (General Secretary) of Mirzapur city. From 1969 to 1971, he served as the Organisational Secretary of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) in the Gorakhpur Division. Shri Rajnath Singh entered politics in 1974, and in 1977, he was elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly. He was later elected as a Member of the Legislative Council (MLC) in 1988 and became the state's Education Minister in 1991. During his tenure as Education Minister in UP, he established some landmarks by introducing the Anti-Copying Act and Vedic Mathematics in the syllabus. He became a member of the Rajya Sabha in 1994. On November 22, 1999, he became Union Surface Transport Minister, wherein he had the opportunity to initiate the National Highway Development Programme (NHDP), a visionary project of India's former Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

On October 28, 2000, he became the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and was twice elected as an MLA from the Haidargarh constituency in Barabanki. On May 24, 2003, he was appointed Union Minister of Agriculture and later, Minister of Food Processing. During this period, he initiated several significant projects such as the Kisan Call Centre and the Farm Income Insurance Scheme. He also launched the 'Bharat Suraksha Yatra,' which traversed several states to address the growing threats to internal security.

Shri Rajnath Singh became the BJP National President on December 31, 2005, a position he held until December 19, 2009. In May 2009, he was elected to the Lok Sabha from Ghaziabad, UP. On May 26, 2014, Shri Rajnath Singh took oath as Union Minister for Home Affairs, a portfolio he held until May 30, 2019. On May 31, 2019, he was appointed as the Union Minister for Defence. Subsequent to the formation of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government after the 2024 General Elections, Shri Rajnath Singh has once again assumed charge of the Ministry of Defence.

MR RAMRAJ NARASIMHAN

Senior Director – Programme Management & Technical Support,
Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)



Ramraj heads programme management and technical support at CDRI, driving the design and execution of initiatives that strengthen infrastructure resilience across Member Countries. With over 20 years of experience in disaster risk reduction, climate resilience, post-disaster reconstruction and early warning, he brings deep regional experience spanning Asia, Africa, and the Pacific.

Before joining CDRI, Ramraj held senior positions at the Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early Warning System (RIMES), UNDP Nepal, and the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), where he focused on enhancing institutional capacities for risk-informed planning, post-disaster recovery, and climate adaptation, particularly in fragile, hazard-prone contexts.

Ramraj champions integrated and inclusive approaches to resilience, blending technical acumen with grounded experience to support national governments, subnational entities, and regional stakeholders. His commitment lies in bridging policy and practice to build responsive, risk-informed systems.

Ramraj holds a Master's degree in Planning from the School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi, and a Bachelor's degree in Architecture from Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Hyderabad.

ABSTRACT

Partnering with SIDS on Resilient Infrastructure

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) contribute less than 1% of global carbon emissions yet face disproportionate climate and disaster risks. The Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) launched Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS) at COP26 to strengthen infrastructure resilience across all 57 SIDS through technical assistance, knowledge-sharing, partnerships and targeted investments.

Through its Infrastructure Resilience Accelerator Fund, IRIS supports 24 projects across 25 SIDS, with a total allocation of US$12.8 million. Initiatives focus on climate risk assessments, resilient infrastructure standards, early warning systems and investment planning. IRIS promotes regional collaboration and knowledge exchange, demonstrating that national ownership, locally relevant solutions and institutional capacity are essential to scaling resilient infrastructure and supporting sustainable development.

VICE ADMIRAL SANJAY JASJIT SINGH, IN (RETD)

SYSM, PVSM, AVSM, NM

Director-General, United Services Institution of India (USI of India)



Vice Admiral Sanjay Jasjit Singh has held a range of command, training and staff appointments, and served on most classes of ships over his four decades of service in the Indian Navy. He superannuated on 31 July 2025.

He has served in a wide range of Naval & Joint Staff appointments, including Deputy Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (Operations) and Vice Chief of Naval Staff at New Delhi, and FOC-in-C Western Naval Command, Mumbai, in 2024-25, through a period of highly intense and resurgent maritime security challenges across the Western IOR.

He is the recipient of several awards for his distinguished service.

A perennial student and scholar, he has six postgraduate degrees, including a PhD.

Since 01 January 2026, he has been serving as Director General of the United Service Institution, Delhi, which is India's oldest think tank, founded in 1870.

VICE ADMIRAL SANJAY MAHINDRU, IN (RETD)

PVSM, AVSM, NM

Former Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff



Vice Admiral Sanjay Mahindru is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Khadakvasla. He was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 01 Jan 85 and is a Submarine and Navigation Specialist.

In his career spanning over 37 years, he has held a variety of Command and Staff appointments both ashore and afloat. The Flag Officer has commanded INS *Shalki*, a Type 1500 Shishumar Class submarine, Cadet Training Ship INS *Krishna*, and Destroyer INS *Rajput*. He has also commanded INS *Satavahana,* the Navy's Submarine Training Establishment, where he set up the School for Advanced Underwater Warfare. In his staff tenures, he has served in the Directorate of Submarine Operations and Directorate of Nuclear Submarine Acquisition at IHQ MoD (N). He has also carried out duties as Naval Assistant to FOC-in-C (West) and FOC-in-C (South).

On promotion to the rank of Rear Admiral in 2015, he tenanted the appointments of Flag Officer Submarines & Flag Officer Maharashtra Area and Chief Staff Officer at HQSFC. On elevation to the rank of Vice Admiral in 2019, he held the challenging and coveted appointment of Deputy C-in-C of the Strategic Forces Command prior to taking over the appointment as Deputy Chief of Naval Staff at IHQ MoD (N).

He has attended the Joint Services Staff College, UK and the College of Naval Warfare, Mumbai. He has an MA (Defence Studies) from King's College, London and an MPhil (Defence Studies) from Mumbai University.

The Flag Officer was awarded the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal in 2018 and the Nau Sena Medal (Gallantry) in 2002 by the Hon'ble President of India.

CAPTAIN (DR) SEAN ANDREWS, RAN (RETD)

CSC
Senior Research Fellow,
Head of Centre, Indo-Pacific
The Changing Character of War: Strategy, Statecraft, & Technology Centre, Pembroke College, University of Oxford (UK),
Australia



Dr Sean Andrews is a retired Royal Australian Navy Captain with over three decades of operational and command experience. He is a Senior Research Fellow with the Strategy, Statecraft and Technology Programme at the Changing Character of War Centre, Pembroke College, University of Oxford, and an Associate Member of King's College London. His research focuses on naval power, maritime security, geoeconomics, national security and great-power competition. He has previously served as Five Eyes Fellow at the Royal Navy Strategic Studies Centre, Senior Maritime Fellow at the Australian National University's National Security College, and Director of the Sea Power Centre–Australia, where he founded the Indo-Pacific's Six Nation Maritime Working Group.

A Principal Warfare Officer and Under Sea Warfare specialist, Dr Andrews held senior operational, joint and strategic appointments, including command at sea and leadership of the Australian Headquarters in the Middle East, for which he received the Conspicuous Service Cross in 2024. He writes and speaks internationally on maritime strategy, policy and the economic dimensions of maritime affairs. His publications include *Naval Constabulary Operations and Fisheries Governance* (2024), with his second book, *The Coming Maritime Test*, scheduled for publication in 2027. He is also leading a collected volume honouring the strategic contributions of the late James Goldrick.

ABSTRACT

Seeing Below the Horizon: A Cooperative Indo-Pacific Architecture for Underwater Domain Awareness and Critical Infrastructure Protection

The Indo-Pacific's maritime awareness frameworks remain focused primarily on surface activity, leaving a critical gap in the protection of undersea cables and other seabed infrastructure. This presentation argues that underwater domain awareness should become an integrated layer within existing regional maritime governance arrangements. It identifies three interconnected deficits - sensing, governance, and coordination and proposes a five-pillar cooperative architecture encompassing layered sensing, information fusion, governance protocols, public–private coordination, and resilience and repair. Rather than creating a new institution or pursuing complete underwater transparency, this approach connects existing initiatives through a federated, risk-based model. Prioritising critical infrastructure corridors, shared incident reporting, and practical government–industry cooperation, the presentation outlines how Indo-Pacific states can strengthen warning, support attribution, and accelerate recovery from disruption.

MS SOFIA FURSTENBERG-STOTT

Co-Founder and Partner, Future Maritime, Sweden



Sofia is a Partner at Future Maritime, Sweden, where she helps organisations develop sustainability strategies and navigate systemic risks in an increasingly complex maritime environment shaped by geopolitical tensions and environmental challenges. With over 20 years of maritime industry experience at Maersk and DNV, she has led global consulting and innovation projects spanning the energy transition, maritime operations, infrastructure and stakeholder collaboration.

Sofia holds an MSc in Chemical Engineering from Lund Institute of Technology, is a TopTech graduate of Haas Business School, and holds an Executive MBA in Shipping & Logistics from Copenhagen Business School. Having recently completed her Board Education, she serves on the European Board of the International Bunker Industry Association (IBIA) and volunteers with the Swedish Home Guard.

ABSTRACT

Strengthening the Interface between Marine Science and Shipping Operations
The Indo-Pacific brings together extraordinary marine biodiversity, some of the world's busiest shipping routes, and countries with widely differing scientific, technological and maritime capabilities. Strengthening the relationship between marine science and shipping operations offers significant opportunities for improving ocean health, maritime resilience and sustainable development.

Scientific knowledge, operational experience and decision-making authority are distributed across a wide range of institutions and stakeholders. Unlocking their collective potential requires effective mechanisms for connecting complementary capabilities and translating marine knowledge into actionable information that can influence maritime decisions.

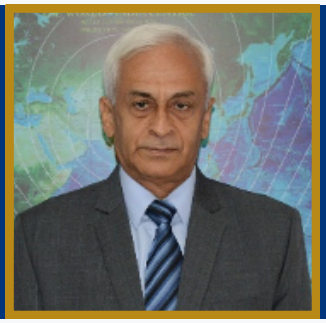
Drawing on research into maritime innovation networks, experience from multi-stakeholder maritime transition initiatives, and emerging approaches to ecosystem-informed shipping decisions, this presentation explores three interconnected dimensions: translating science into operational decision-support; designing and orchestrating effective cooperation between scientific institutions, the maritime industry, navies, authorities and other stakeholders; and strengthening shared capabilities through practical collaboration.

Particular attention will be given to how countries and organisations with differing capabilities can contribute to, and benefit from, collaborative approaches. The presentation will offer considerations for strengthening cooperation across the Indo-Pacific, including how progress might be assessed in terms of knowledge exchange, operational decision-making and benefits for ocean health and resilience.

ADMIRAL SUNIL LANBA, IN (RETD)

PVSM, AVSM, PJG

Former Chief of the Indian Naval Staff



Admiral Sunil Lanba, PVSM, AVSM (Retd), is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla; the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington; the College of Defence Management, Secunderabad; and the Royal College of Defence Studies, London.

Across a distinguished naval career spanning four decades, Admiral Lanba, a specialist in Navigation and Aircraft Direction, served aboard several ships in the Indian Navy's Eastern and Western Fleets. His sea commands included INS *Kakinada*, *Himgiri*, *Ranvijay* and *Mumbai*. He also served as Executive Officer of the aircraft carrier INS *Viraat* and as Fleet Operations Officer of the Western Fleet. His appointments ashore encompassed operational, training and tri-Service institutions, reflecting his longstanding commitment to professional military education and the development of future leadership.

As Chief of Staff of the Southern Naval Command, he transformed training methodologies, and as Flag Officer Sea Training, introduced measures to enhance the combat readiness of Indian warships. He subsequently served as Flag Officer Commanding Maharashtra and Gujarat Naval Area, Chief of Staff of the Eastern Naval Command, Commandant of the National Defence College, and Vice Chief of the Naval Staff. In these roles, he advanced coastal security, capability development, infrastructure modernisation and tri-Service integration.

Admiral Lanba assumed command as the 23rd Chief of the Naval Staff on 31 May 2016 and became Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee on 31 December 2016. Following his retirement, he served as Chairman of the National Maritime Foundation from June 2019 to January 2022. In recognition of his exceptional service, he received the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal and the Param Vishisht Seva Medal from the President of India. He was also awarded the Meritorious Service Medal (Military) by the Republic of Singapore for his contribution to bilateral defence relations between the Indian Navy and the Republic of Singapore Navy.

VICE ADMIRAL TARUN SOBTI, IN (RETD)

UYSM, AVSM, VSM

Former Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff



Vice Admiral Tarun Sobti, UYSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd), concluded his distinguished career in the Indian Navy on 31 July 2026, following over 38 years of service, most recently as Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff. His career reflects a sustained contribution to India's maritime security, naval modernisation, strategic cooperation and the development of future naval leadership in the Indo-Pacific.

Commissioned into the Indian Navy on 1 July 1988, Vice Admiral Sobti specialised in Navigation and Direction. An alumnus of the National Defence Academy, he received the President's Gold Medal for graduating at the top of his class. He also undertook advanced studies at the Collège Interarmées de Défense in Paris and the College of Naval Warfare in Mumbai, where he received the Chief of the Naval Staff Gold Medal for the Best Operational Paper.

His operational career included service aboard several frontline warships and command of INS *Nishank* and INS *Kora*. He played a key role in the commissioning of INS *Kolkata*, India's first indigenously built stealth destroyer of the Kolkata class, contributing to the advancement of indigenous naval technology and capability. He later commanded the Eastern Fleet, overseeing operations that included humanitarian assistance and disaster relief across the Indian Ocean, the delivery of medical oxygen during the COVID-19 pandemic, and participation in Exercise MALABAR 2021, which strengthened interoperability with partner navies.

Vice Admiral Sobti also served as Naval Attaché in Moscow, Deputy Commandant and Chief Instructor at the Indian Naval Academy, Ezhimala, and Director General of Project Seabird, where he oversaw the expansion of the strategically important Karwar Naval Base. As Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff from October 2023, he contributed to naval modernisation, operational planning and maritime readiness, including during Operation SINDOOR. His career underscores the importance of technological advancement, institutional capacity-building, professional education and international engagement in addressing shared maritime challenges across the Indo-Pacific.

In recognition of his service, Vice Admiral Sobti received the Uttam Yudh Seva Medal, Ati Vishisht Seva Medal and Vishisht Seva Medal. His distinguished career exemplifies the role of naval leadership in strengthening maritime security, advancing indigenous capabilities and fostering cooperation among regional and international partners.

SHRI VIKRAM MISRI

Foreign Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs,
Government of India



Shri Vikram Misri assumed charge as Foreign Secretary on 15 July 2024.

A career diplomat from the 1989 batch of the Indian Foreign Service, Ambassador Misri has served in various capacities at the Ministry of External Affairs, in the Prime Minister's Office in New Delhi and in various Indian Missions abroad in Europe, Africa, Asia and North America.

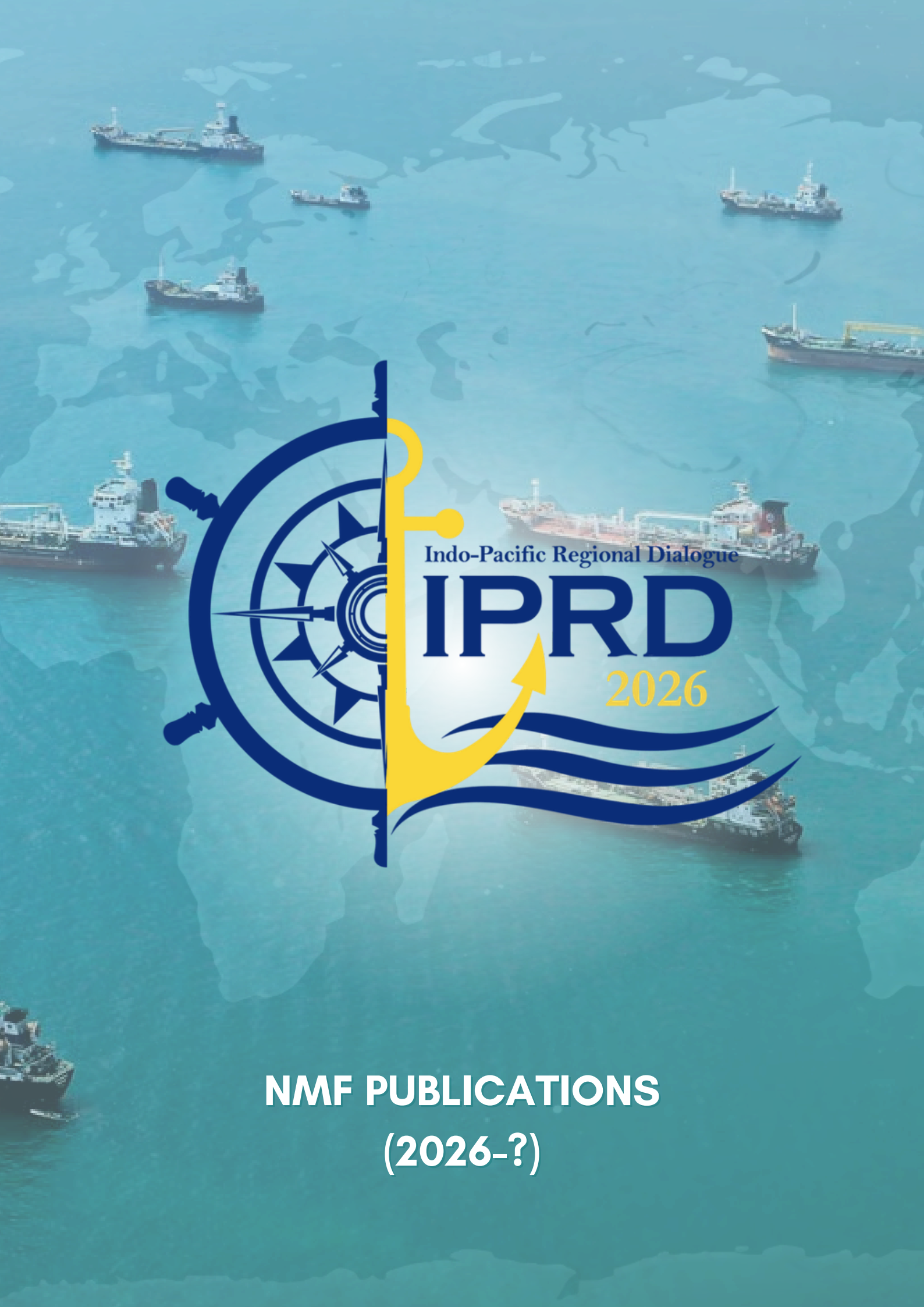
His assignments in New Delhi have included work on the Pakistan desk of the Ministry of External Affairs and stints on the staffs of two Foreign Ministers (Mr IK Gujral and Mr Pranab Mukherjee).

Apart from serving as the Joint Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office, he has also served as Private Secretary to three Prime Ministers of India (Shri IK Gujral; Dr Manmohan Singh and Shri Narendra Modi).

Ambassador Misri has served abroad in Brussels, Tunis, Islamabad and Washington D.C. He was Deputy High Commissioner of India in Sri Lanka and Consul General of India in Munich.

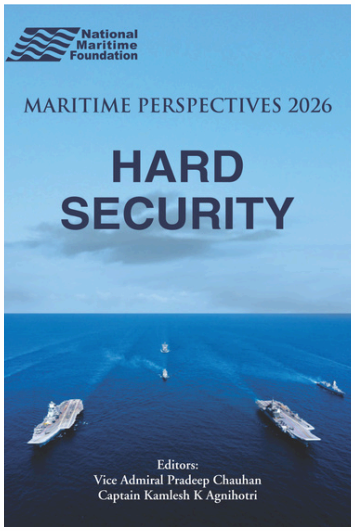
Ambassador Misri was appointed India's Ambassador to Spain in 2014, Ambassador to Myanmar in 2016 and Ambassador to the People's Republic of China, where he served from January 2019 to December 2021. He was most recently the Deputy National Security Adviser (Strategic Affairs) of India, a post he held from 01 January 2022 to 30 June 2024.

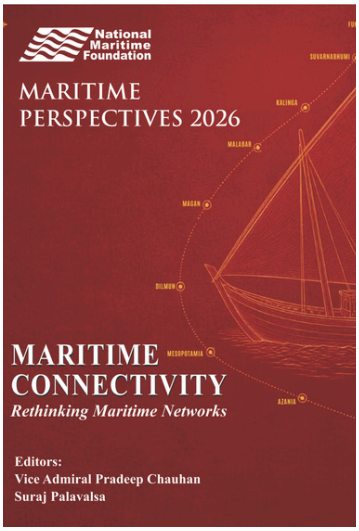
Ambassador Misri was born in Srinagar and had his early education there (Burn Hall School and DAV School) as well as in Udhampur (Carmel Convent School) in Jammu and Kashmir. He finished his schooling from the Scindia School in Gwalior and went on to earn a Bachelor's degree with Honours in History from the Hindu College, University of Delhi, and an MBA from XLRI, Jamshedpur. Before joining the government, he worked for three years in the private sector in the fields of advertising (Lintas India - Bombay and Contract Advertising - Delhi) and advertising film-making. Ambassador Misri is a Fellow of the Aspen Institute USA's India Leadership Initiative (now the Kamalnayan Bajaj Fellowship). He speaks fluent Hindi, English and Kashmiri and has a working knowledge of French.

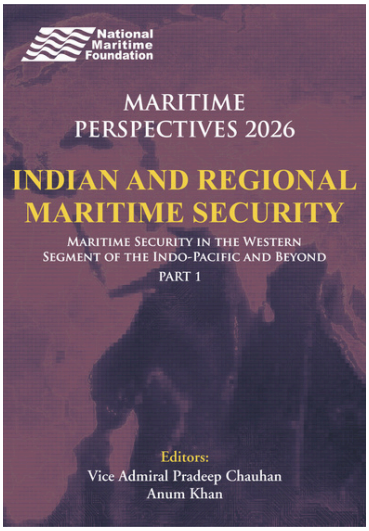


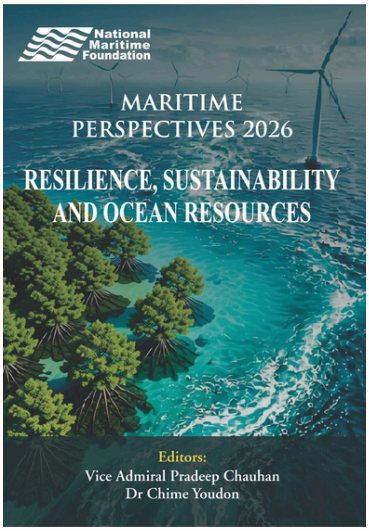
NMF PUBLICATIONS
(2026-?)

NMF PUBLICATIONS

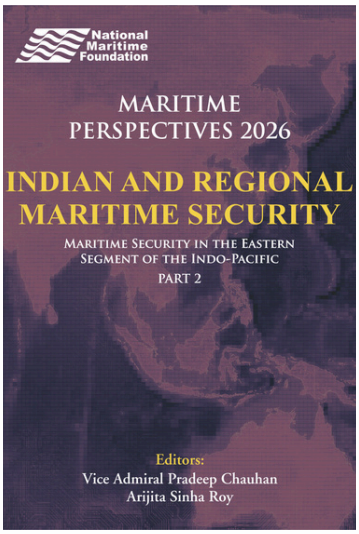




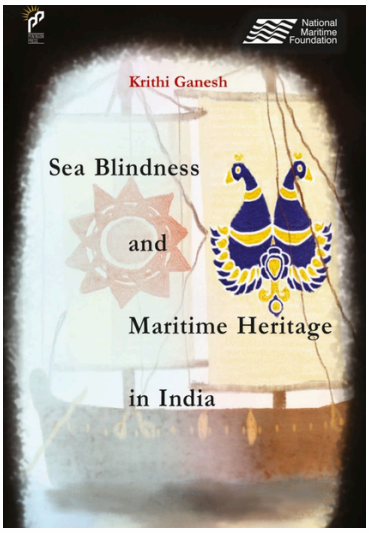


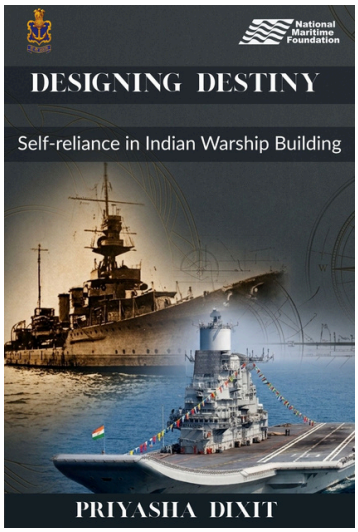




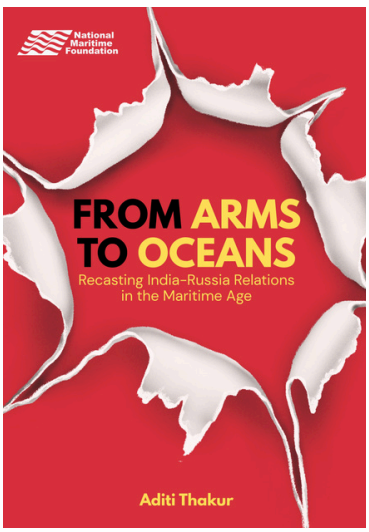


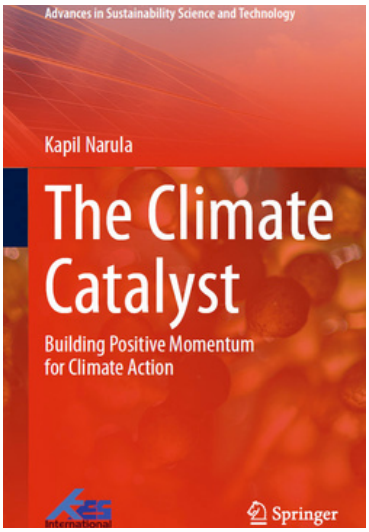






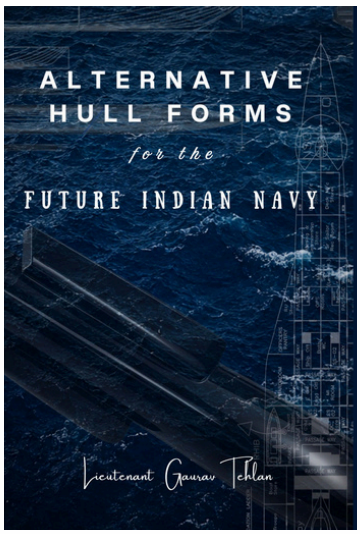




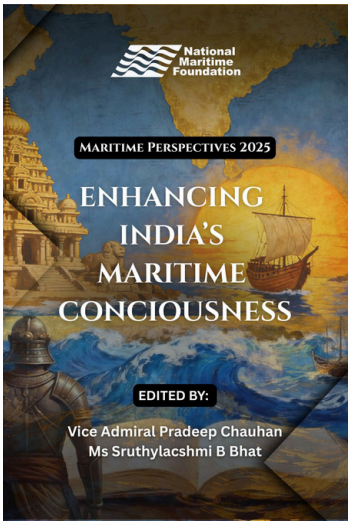


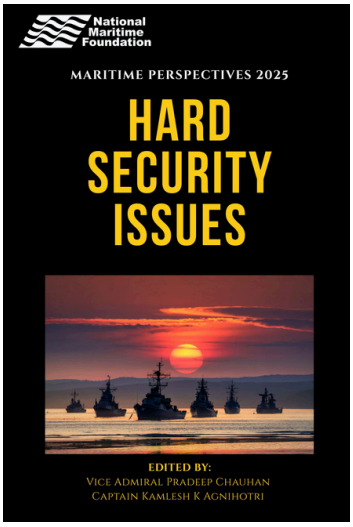
NMF PUBLICATIONS



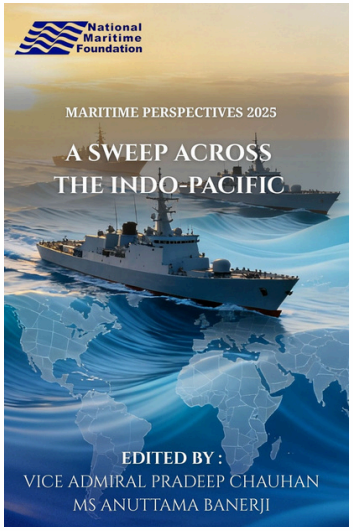






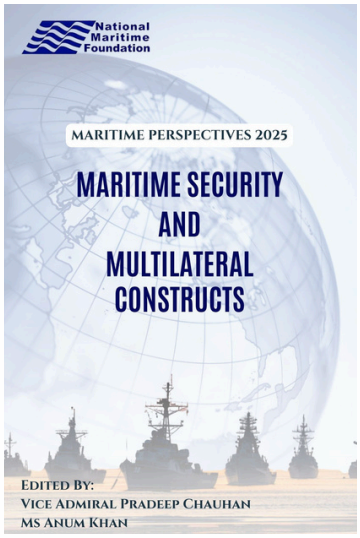


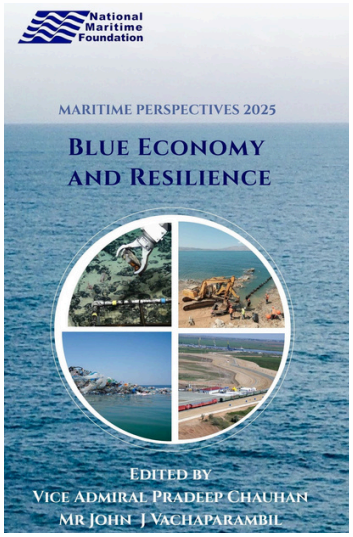


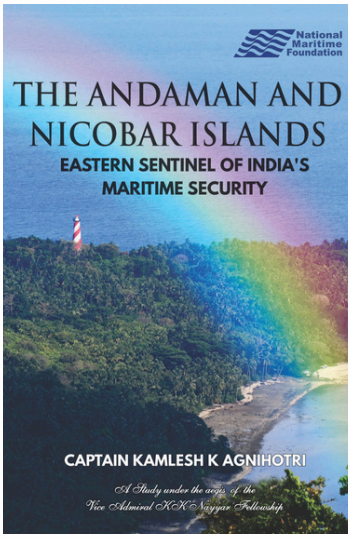






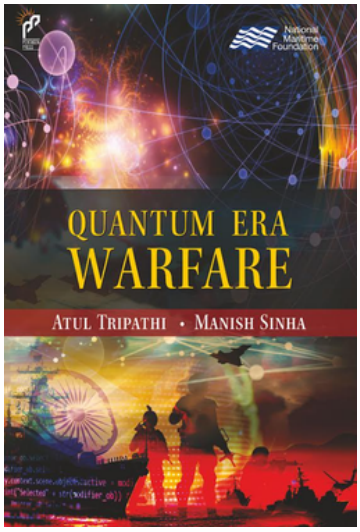


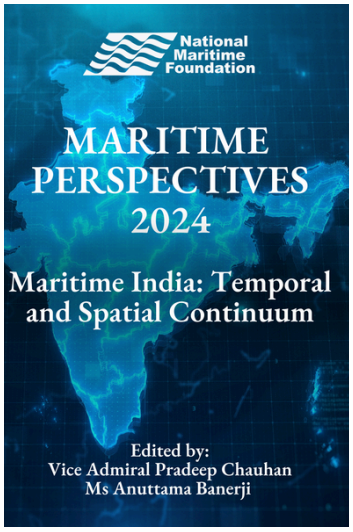




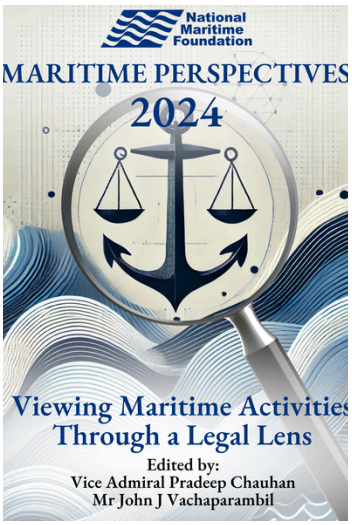
NMF PUBLICATIONS





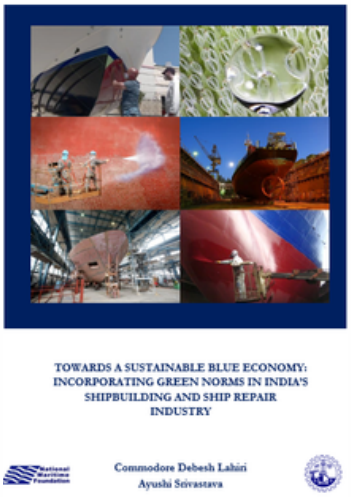


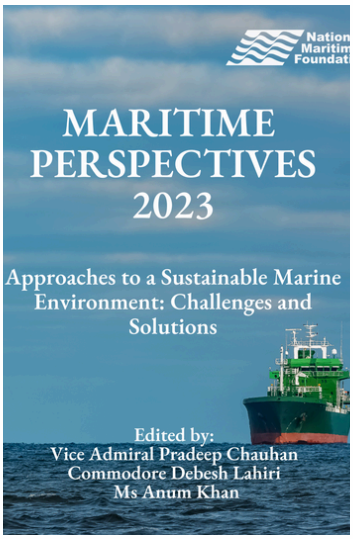


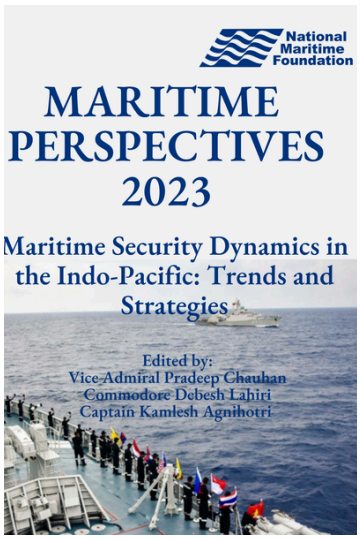


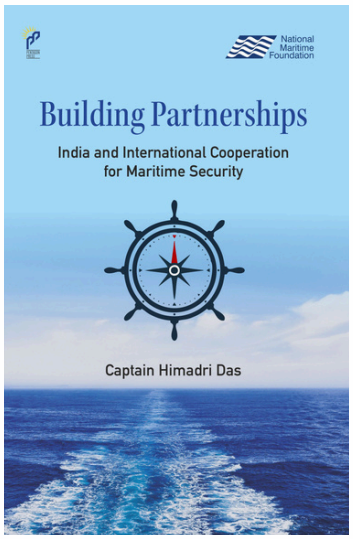


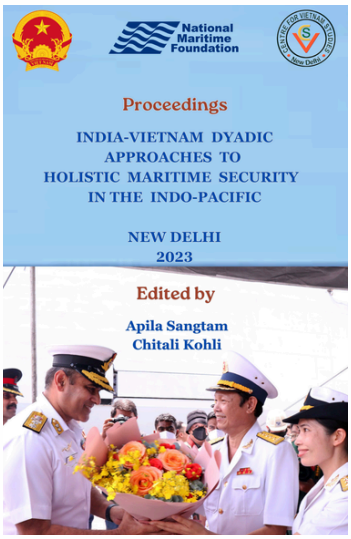














FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA