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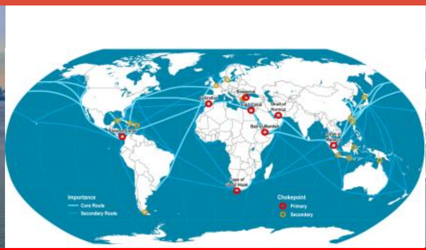
Indian Maritime News Express

Date:1st Dec 25 **Mumbai-India**

International Maritime Trade & Transport



India races to rebuild its lost maritime muscle: ‘come aboard’

India is eyeing a future as a leading shipping and shipbuilding nation, backed by big investments – and expertise from South Korea and Japan

Today, as container ships queue outside clogged ports and great powers quarrel over access and tariffs, India is trying to sail back into that history – this time as a modern shipping and shipbuilding power.Standing before global investors late last month, a day after presiding over a glittering maritime industry showcase in Mumbai, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi offered a deceptively simple invitation: “Come aboard.”

It was more than a sales pitch. Modi’s administration seeks to reclaim India’s maritime prowess and anchor itself as a resilient economic and strategic force at a moment of rising geopolitical uncertainty.

“When the global seas are rough, the world looks for a steady lighthouse,” Modi told the Global Maritime CEO Forum on October 29. “India is well poised to play that role with strength and stability.”

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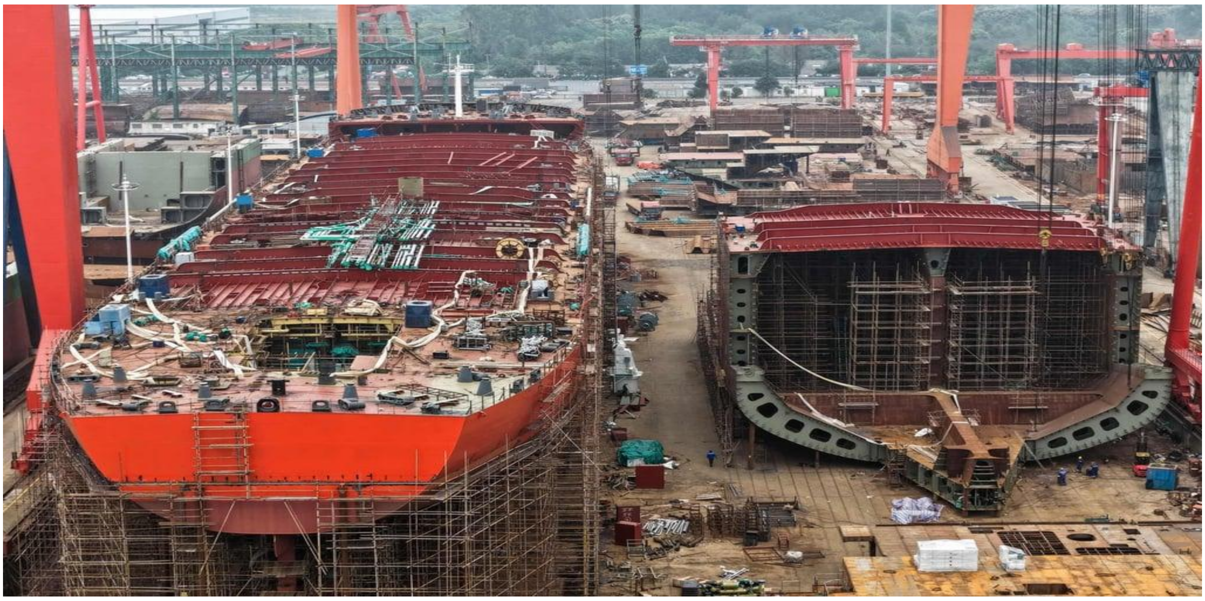

In his speech at India Maritime Week, the prime minister pitched his country as "a symbol of strategic autonomy, peace and inclusive growth" that would weather global tensions, trade disruptions and shifting supply chains.

Investors appear to have listened. Investment pledges totalling US$135 billion poured in during the event, from October 27 to 31, with commitments spread across port development, shipping, shipbuilding, sustainability and port-led industrialisation, marking a 41 per cent increase from the country's last major maritime forum in 2023.
Behind the investment blitz is a deeper ambition: to build industrial muscle, strengthen naval capability, command the sea lanes that carry India's trade and assert maritime influence over the Indo-Pacific.

"It's really time for us to rise as a maritime nation," said policy analyst Vivek Mishra of the Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi. "We are so behind the curve."In addition to shipping, India has set itself the goal of becoming one of the world's top 10 shipbuilding nations by 2030. It currently occupies only a sliver of the global commercial shipbuilding market, far behind China, South Korea and Japan.

But analysts say its leading shipyards currently operate to global standards and have the potential to scale up if policy momentum is sustained."I would really like to see the domestic capacity being augmented," said Mishra, deputy director of the Delhi-based think tank's strategic studies programme.

The investment pledges unveiled at India Maritime Week come on the heels of a 700 billion rupee (US$8 billion) reforms package approved by the cabinet in September to boost domestic capacity. The measures include a shipbuilding financial assistance scheme and the creation of a Maritime Development Fund aimed at shoring up weaker links across the value chain

South Korea has emerged as a key partner: Cochin Shipyard in Kerala state has teamed up with HD Korea Shipbuilding, Hanwha Ocean has opened a global engineering centre in India and Samsung Heavy Industries plans to co-develop ships with Swan Defence of

Gujarat. The Korea Marine Equipment Association, representing some of the East Asian nation's biggest shipbuilders, has also pledged broad support.

"South Korea's shipbuilding giants are eager to team up with India," said analyst Srinivasan Balakrishnan, director of Indo-Pacific strategic engagements and partnerships at the Indic Researchers Forum think tank."It's a smart, symbiotic play that's turbocharging our defence sector."

Other countries are following suit. Japan's largest shipbuilder, Imabari Shipbuilding, and Japanese shipping giant Mitsui OSK are exploring joint tanker production, while Norway is investing in green shipping and navigation, according to Balakrishnan.These moves, alongside collaborations with UK companies, "could amplify our maritime edge", he said.

A strategic coastline

Geography is one of India's greatest natural advantages in the maritime domain. With a long coastline and a central position in the Indian Ocean, its waters have so far been relatively insulated from the disruptions roiling global shipping routes, including attacks linked to the wars in Gaza and Ukraine.

The Indian Ocean is a vital artery for commerce and energy supplies connecting Europe, Asia and Africa, carrying oil cargoes and critical raw materials. Yet Delhi has only recently begun to attempt to systematically consolidate this advantage, both commercially and militarily.

In a recent editorial, The Hindu newspaper lamented that past policies had hastened the decline of marquee entities such as the state-owned Shipping Corporation of India – once a global leader in ship ownership – including by withdrawing its priority right to transport India's oil imports.

The newspaper said the country had received a "rude awakening" when the pandemic upended global supply chains and revealed how little leverage Delhi had over its own trade, given its heavy dependence on foreign-owned vessels.

"The government has realised that shipping, though a business, has much strategic importance, especially during times of disruption, war and where protectionism and resurgent national interests of Western countries rule trade," it said.

Recent policies have strengthened the finances of major ports such as Chennai and Kolkata – enabling them to embark on new projects – and simplified regulations for foreign shipping companies. But the paper warned that India was still a long way off producing "state-of-the-art LNG ships or futuristic green-fuel burning vessels".

Policy bottlenecks

To turn declarations and investment pledges into hulls and tonnage, analysts say Delhi will need a sustained, private sector-led modernisation drive that continues well beyond the high-profile announcements made at events like India Maritime Week.High steel costs, policy bottlenecks and a dependence on imported components inflate the industry's operating costs.

"There's a mismatch between what's on the ground and what's there on the policy level," said Anil Kishore Singh, a shipping industry consultant, adding that many Indian shipyards operated far below their potential and had made little headway despite having "infrastructure status".This status is supposed to make it easier and cheaper for shipowners and shipbuilders to access long-term, low-cost finance, including commercial loans from non-resident lenders.

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The government had also offered shipbuilding subsidies but these excluded the small vessels crucial for transport on inland waterways, Singh said.

Costs further erode competitiveness. Steel, a key raw material in shipbuilding, is more expensive in India than in China and importing specialised parts and equipment is cumbersome."All these will add to costs. We have put the cart before the horse," said Singh, a veteran industry executive, urging policymakers to focus on building a broader ecosystem, much as India did with its automobile industry.

Global carmakers, including South Korea's Hyundai and Japan's Suzuki Motor, are now among the leading players in the world's third-largest auto market thanks to sustained efforts to build a deep, domestically rooted supply chain.

"It is related to the ease of doing business," Singh said. "I suppose the Koreans are thinking the way they are making cars in India, they will be making ships. But the initial experience may be tedious."

He added that cost competitiveness could be even more challenging in shipping due to many key components and equipment being imported. "This will impact cost competitiveness for customers both local and foreign."The urgency is heightened by external pressures, including US tariffs. Delhi is working towards a trade arrangement to ease Washington's steep 50 per cent tariffs on certain Indian products.

But analysts say a more robust maritime ecosystem would offer greater insulation against such shocks.
China spent roughly two decades nurturing its shipbuilding industry, Singh said, learning from Western manufacturers before emerging as a dominant global player. Indian shipyards at Dahej and Pipavav, which he described as "world-class", had yet to produce vessels that made a comparable mark.

Subramaniam recommended a multipronged strategy to realise India's maritime ambitions, spanning global partnerships, investments in next-generation shipbuilding and workforce and supply chain development.

"The path to becoming a global leader in commercial shipbuilding requires more than just infrastructure, it requires supportive policies," he said, adding that this should also advance India's sustainable development goals."To support the future development of the maritime industry, one of the crucial areas to address is a growing demand for vessels powered by green fuels."

Private sector help
Analysts agree that building ships in isolation will not be enough. Infrastructure projects such as the Great Nicobar transshipment hub – envisioned as an Indo-Pacific gateway – are also needed.

"Otherwise, there is an asymmetry," Mishra said. The Great Nicobar project aims to reduce India's dependence on foreign ports for cargo, strengthening its naval and surveillance capabilities and creating a major maritime and air connectivity hub in the Indian Ocean that could eventually rival the throughput of ports such as Singapore.

Rather than viewing such a hub as a competitor, Mishra said countries like Singapore could become partners given strong diplomatic ties, adding that industrial groups such as Adani and JSW, already on an aggressive spree of port acquisitions and development, could also expand into shipbuilding if offered the right policy incentives.

"Some focus has been restored [to shipbuilding] by roping in the private sector both from India and abroad, but unless the private sector really pitches in, the pace of development remains a challenge," he said.
(Source: South China Morning Post)

India re-elected to I. M. O. Council with the highest vote

The IMO is the premier body that oversees the world's maritime sector, which in turn underpins international trade, transport and all maritime activities.India has been re-elected to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Council with the highest vote in its category at elections held at its Assembly in London for the 2025-26 biennium.

India’s election in Category B on Friday falls under the collection of 10 states with “the largest interest in international seaborne trade,” alongside Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).
The newly elected Council will meet for its 136th session on December 4 and will elect its Chair and Vice-Chair for the next biennium, the IMO said.

“India re-elected to the IMO Council securing the highest vote in Category B with 154 votes,” the Indian High Commission in London announced following the vote
he IMO Assembly normally meets once every two years in a regular session. It is responsible for approving the work programme, voting the budget and determining the financial arrangements of the organisation.

Kandla handles 100 million tons of cargo in FY26, fastest major port

New Delhi: Deendayal Port Authority (DPA), Kandla, has set a new record by becoming the fastest major port in India to handle 100 million tons of cargo in the financial year 2025-26.
The milestone, achieved ahead of the schedule, highlights the port’s operational strength, coordination among stakeholders, and growing role in India’s maritime trade, according to a press release from the Deendayal Port Authority.

Indian Port Sector

VOC Port receives first Clinker vessel in line with the MoU with Ambuja Cement Limited

The clinker will be transported by road to Ambuja's grinding unit at Mela Arasadi, Tuticorin, located around 24 kms from the Port, for further processing into cement.

VOC Port has received the first clinker consignment in line with the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with Ambuja Cement Limited, Gujarat, on 19.11.2025, as part of the Minimum Guaranteed Tonnage-based Incentive Scheme for coastal clinkers. The MoU ensures coastal movement of 2,50,000 metric tonnes of clinker annually.

On 24.11.2025, as part of this MoU commitment, the vessel MV Lima Trader was berthed at NCB-II. It carried 56,440 metric tonnes of coastal clinker from Sanghi Port, Gujarat. The vessel was received by Seaport Shipping as the ship agent and is being handled by Seaport Logistics as the stevedore. The clinker will be transported by road to Ambuja's grinding unit at Mela Arasadi, Tuticorin, located around 24 kms from the Port, for further processing into cement.

Susanta Kumar Purohit, IRSEE, Chairperson, in his message conveyed that this landmark shipment is a major step toward sustainable and cost-effective coastal transportation, aligning with the Government of India's vision for promoting coastal shipping. He also noted that more clinker vessels under this MoU are expected to call at the Port in the coming months, further strengthening cargo volumes and reinforcing the Port-and industry partnership.

PPA achieves the 100 MMT cargo throughput in a Fiscal

Notably, in FY 2024-25, the coveted mark of 100 MMT was achieved on 9th December 2024. The record was achieved in 241 days in current fiscal against 253 days in last financial year.

India’s Foreign Trade

“Export curbs on ferrous scrap from UAE, EU creating significant challenge for India.”

The depletion of international ferrous scrap sources due to export curbs like those from the UAE and potential restrictions from the EU aimed at promoting a circular economy and tightening environmental criteria is creating a significant challenge for India, which is currently scrap deficient, a top executive said.

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To harness domestic scrap and meet the demand, which is projected to reach 65 million tonnes (MT) annually by 2030 with a potential import gap of 20–30 MT, several already initiated measures such as Vehicle Scrapping Policy, Recycling Infrastructure Development, Policy Support among others must be given further impetus said Vinaya Varma, MD, mjunction Services Ltd., a digital platform that provides online marketplaces *and digital services for businesses and helps in transparent price discovery of metal scrap and other commodities.*

*The Centre’s scrapping policy, launche*d in 2021, aims to encourage recycling and remove old, polluting vehicles from the roads, although its uptake is currently low. This is a key step to generating end-of-life vehicle (ELV) scrap and the process needs to be expedited. The depletion of international ferrous scrap sources due to export curbs like those from the UAE and potential restrictions from the EU aimed at promoting a circular economy and tightening environmental criteria is creating a significant challenge for India, which is currently scrap deficient, a top executive said.

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Indian producers like Tata Steel have started establishing steel recycling plants to formalize and scale up the domestic processing of scrap,” he said.

To deal with the issue the government is actively promoting the shift to Electric Arc Furnace (EAF) steelmaking, which uses scrap as its primary feedstock, he said adding companies like mjunction are building AI-driven digital platforms to bridge the demand-supply gap by organising scrap procurement. (**Source: The Hindu)**

Bangladesh Export Ban Hits Onion Traders Hard In West Bengal

Huge quantities of onions are rotting on the border between the two countries after Bangladesh refused to procure the bulb from India.

Malda: The ban on import of onions from India to Bangladesh has the traders of West Bengal worried.

Since Mohammad Yunus was appointed the chief advisor of the neighbouring country, several decisions have had an impact on both countries. Sources said while people in Bangladesh are buying onions for 100 taka per kilo, the country has banned the import of onions from India.

The traders said a large quantity of onions (approximately 3,000 tonnes) are left to rot on the border. However, if the stock had reached Bangladesh, the common people of the country could have bought them at half the current price. It is not only the citizens of Bangladesh. Indian traders too are staring at serious problems due to the import ban on the bulb by the neighbouring nation which witnessed large-scale unrest.

The traders said Indian exporters brought a large quantity of onions to the border after receiving orders from their Bangladeshi counterparts. But, the government of Bangladesh banned the import of Indian onions which are now left to rot at the port. Huge quantities of onions can be seen piled up with no takers from Mahdipur in Malda to the Hili border in South Dinajpur.

As per a notification issued by the Sona Masjid Import and Export Group of Bangladesh on November 16, the Department of Agricultural Extension started controlling the import permits of Indian onions a few days ago. In the first phase, some importers were given International Permit (IP) to import 50 tonnes of Indian onions.

Later, on the demand of the importers, the Bangladesh government gave IP to import 30 tonnes of onions. Then out of nowhere, the Yunus administration completely stopped the import of Indian onions. The Bangladesh government stated that the step was taken to protect the interests of domestic onion farmers.

Usually, at this time of the year, 30-35 truckloads of onions are exported to Bangladesh daily through the Mahdipur and Hili borders. Indian exporters started buying onions from Maharashtra and stocking them while there was still time. But it is being claimed that this year, Bangladesh has also produced good quality onions because of which the neighbouring country has turned its back on India.

Sudhir Mandal, an onion exporter from Mahdipur, said, "Earlier this month, importers from Bangladesh had informed us that they were ready to import onions. We brought onions from Nashik but, suddenly, the Yunus administration banned the import of onions. We are forced to store onions in warehouses adjacent to the port. But, now the onions have started rotting".

Mandal said he had bought four truckloads of onions. "I had to sell a portion of my stock for justsix taka per kilo. We have suffered a lot due to the decision of the Bangladesh government," he said.

Nuruddin Biswas, an onion importer from Bangladesh, said, "We are ready to import Indian onions. But, due to the government's decision, we cannot do so. There is nothing we can do about it. If the government gives us a permit to import onions, we will bring Indian onions back to the country."

Ujjwal Saha, the state secretary of the West Bengal Exporters Committee, said, "When Bangladesh announced the import of onions, Indian exporters bought adequate stock from Nashik. Suddenly, the Bangladesh government stopped issuing import permits for Indian onions in the name of the interests of its own farmers. This has caused great problems for the exporters of India".

He said onions stored in warehouses adjacent to the Mahdipur land port are rotting. "On behalf of the organization, we have already submitted a written complaint to the India-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce in Dhaka regarding the matter. We hope that the Bangladesh government will give the IP of the onions stored on the Indian border after considering the situation," Saha said.

Compiled by Dr.Sham Choughule through various sources for private circulation

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1st Dec 2025