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Global Maritime Trade & Transport

Straits of Malacca and Singapore continues to be an area of sea robbery



ReCAAP reports 108 sea robbery incidents reported in 25, which is the highest number of incidents recorded in the SOMS during the 19-year period from 07to25.

The ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre (ISC) on Friday (9 January) issued its 2025 annual report on piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia today at the 17th Nautical Forum held in Singapore. The forum was attended by over 120 participants from shipping companies, shipping associations, government and law enforcement agencies, diplomatic missions and academia.

The key highlights of the annual report, covering the period of January to December 2025, are as follows: The ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre (ISC) on Friday (9 January) issued its 2025 annual report on piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia today at the 17th Nautical Forum held in Singapore.

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Situation of Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia – 2025

- A total of 132 incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia were reported to ReCAAP ISC from January to December 2025. This marks a 23% increase over the 107 incidents reported in 2024. Of the 132 incidents recorded, 127 were actual incidents and five were attempted incidents.
- The Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS) continues to be an area of concern, with 108 sea robbery incidents reported in 2025. This is the highest number of incidents recorded in the SOMS during the 19-year period from 2007 to 2025.
- Fewer incidents were reported in ports and anchorages in Bangladesh, Indonesia and Philippines in 2025 compared to 2024. Marginal increase in the number of incidents in India's anchorages.
- The incidents in Asia in 2025 were of lower severity compared to 2024. Of the 127 actual incidents in 2025, 53% were classified as CAT 4 (lowest severity), where the perpetrators were not reported to have carried any weapon and the crew were not injured. In comparison, 44% of the actual incidents in 2024 were CAT 4. In addition, there were no CAT 1 incidents (highest severity) reported in 2025, compared to two CAT 1 incidents in 2024.
- For the 5th consecutive year, there has been no report of incident of abduction of crew in the Sulu-Celebes Seas and waters off Eastern Sabah. The last incident occurred on 17 January 2020. In January 2025, the Philippine Coast Guard downgraded the threat level of 'Abduction of crew for ransom in the Sulu-Celebes Seas' from "Moderate Low" to "Low" meaning 'No information or monitored activities suggest an impending attack; hence incidents are not expected to occur'.

Area of Concern – Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS)

- A total of 108 incidents (104 actual and four attempted) were reported in the busy and narrow waterways of the SOMS in 2025. This is a 74% increase over the 62 incidents reported in the SOMS in 2024. The incidents were mostly opportunistic theft committed during hours of darkness between 8pm and 6am. In the majority of incidents, the crew was not injured.
- Approximately 87% of the incidents in the SOMS in 2025 occurred in the first seven months of the year (January to July). There was a significant decline in the number of incidents in the SOMS from August to December 2025, following the arrests of perpetrators by the Indonesian authorities in July and August 2025, with evidence from the CCTV footages.
- In about half the incidents reported in the SOMS, nothing was stolen. The remaining incidents reported stolen items such as engine spares, scrap metal, unsecured items, ship stores and personal belongings of crew.
- Over half of the incidents in the SOMS occurred onboard bulk carriers (52%), with the remaining incidents occurring onboard tankers (23%), container ships (10%), tug boats towing barges (12%) and general cargo ships (3%).

"The sharp increase in number of incidents in the SOMS in 2025 does not indicate a corresponding increase in threat to maritime trade passing through the SOMS. The higher number of incidents largely corresponds to minor petty theft cases. In fact, there were no severe CAT 1 incidents in the SOMS in 2025," said ReCAAP ISC Executive Director, Mr Vijay D Chafekar.

"While the increase in sea robbery incidents in the SOMS highlights the continuing security challenges faced by ships transiting the busy waterway, the decline in incidents following the arrest of perpetrators by the Riau Islands Regional Police illustrates the deterrent effect of effective enforcement.

“To help reduce the number of incidents, the ReCAAP ISC would like to urge shipping companies to report all incidents of theft and unauthorised boarding to the nearest coastal state authority. Where possible, shipping industry should provide CCTV footage of perpetrators as evidence when making incident reports, so as to assist law enforcement agencies to swiftly arrest and prosecute the suspects.”

Iran Releases Greek-Owned Tanker *St. Nikolas* After Two-Year Detention

Iran has quietly released the Marshall Islands-flagged, Greek-owned oil tanker *St. Nikolas* after holding the vessel for approximately two years, according to maritime intelligence firm [TankerTrackers](#).

The release marks the latest chapter in a prolonged series of tit-for-tat vessel seizures between Iran and Western nations that have periodically roiled shipping through critical Middle Eastern chokepoints.

Iranian naval and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) forces initially seized the *St. Nikolas* in January 2024 as it transited the Gulf of Oman carrying Iraqi crude oil bound for Turkey. At the time, Iranian authorities claimed they were acting under a “court order,” though the seizure was widely viewed as retaliation for earlier U.S. actions.

The tanker’s detention [traces back](#) to April 2023, when U.S. authorities confiscated the vessel—then known as the *Suez Rajan*—in the South China Sea. That operation targeted over 980,000 barrels of Iranian crude oil belonging to the IRGC. The ship was subsequently brought to U.S. waters, where it waited off the Texas coast for more than two and a half months before the oil was discharged.

The U.S. Justice Department later revealed that the seizure came after the vessel’s bareboat charterer, [Suez Rajan Limited](#), pleaded guilty to conspiring to violate sanctions against Iran. As part of a deferred prosecution agreement, Greece-based Empire Navigation agreed to transport the Iranian oil to the United States for physical seizure while covering the voyage expenses.

Iran’s response was swift and sustained. Almost immediately after the seizure of the *Suez Rajan*, Iran retaliated by seizing two tankers near the Strait of Hormuz, namely the *Advantage Sweet* and *Niovi*, the latter of which Iran continues to hold. The *Advantage Sweet* was carrying cargo for U.S. oil giant Chevron, though Iran’s rationale for detaining the *Niovi* remained less clear.

The pattern mirrors a 2022 incident in which Greece impounded the Iranian tanker *Pegas* on behalf of the United States, prompting Iranian forces to seize two Greek tankers a month later. After the U.S. confiscated part of the cargo, Greece’s supreme court ultimately ruled the oil had to be returned to Iran.

The Strait of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman together form a crucial waterway through which a fifth of all traded oil passes. The region has become increasingly fraught since 2019, when Iran began a series of ship seizures and assaults following the U.S. withdrawal from the Iranian nuclear deal in 2018.

Following the *Suez Rajan* seizure in April 2023, Greece—the world’s largest ship-owning nation—issued warnings to shipowners to avoid sailing close to Iranian waters to prevent possible retaliation.

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Cargo ship and its three crew members in distress at Vietnam sea.



Ship struck a reef in the Con Nhen area Lan Ha Bay (Cat Hai Special Economic Zone) Border Guard forces promptly reached the distressed vessel at sea. Photo: Cat Ba Border Guard)

January 13th, the Cat Ba Border Guard Station received an urgent report from Mr. Nguyen Hong Quan (born in 1992, residing in Hamlet 11, Cat Hai Special Zone) about a transport vessel that had collided with an underwater reef and was at risk of sinking in the Con Nhen area, Lan Ha Bay (belonging to the Cat Hai Special Zone, [Hai Phong](#) City).

The Cat Ba Border Guard Station reported to the Command Board of the Hai Phong City Border Guard and the People's Committee of the Cat Hai Special Zone, and deployed a task force consisting of 7 officers and soldiers and 1 speedboat, directly commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Bui Anh Tuan, Deputy Commander of the Cat Ba Border Guard Station. To ensure the effectiveness of the rescue operation, the unit mobilized an additional HP-5997 motorboat from Nam Cuong One-Member Limited Company, captained by Mr. Pham Hong Viet, to participate in the rescue effort.

At 11:20 AM on the same day, rescue forces reached the distressed vessel. The cargo ship Hoang Dao 36, registration number HD-5556, captained by Mr. Hoang Van Dao (born in 1971, residing in Thanh Ha commune, Hai Phong city), with 3 crew members on board, was transporting 1,247 tons of thermal power plant ash and was listing to the right. Water had flooded the bow compartment due to hitting an underwater reef in the Con Nhen area, causing a tear in the hull on the port side.

The rescue team, in coordination with the crew members, made efforts to pump out the water to prevent the sinking, while simultaneously contacting and mobilizing generators, high-capacity water pumps from local residents, and professional divers to handle the incident.

By 12:35 PM on the same day, divers and their equipment had temporarily repaired the tear, preventing water from flooding the compartment and averting the risk of the ship sinking. This ensured the safety of both people and cargo, and prevented marine

environmental pollution from the large amount of ash and slag on board. The Cat Ba Border Guard Station has contacted a rescue vessel for towing assistance and is continuing to coordinate efforts to thoroughly resolve the issue with the Hoang Dao 36 vessel.
Source: BAIRD NEWS)

MSC withdraws Vizhinjam from India-Africa rotation, raising transshipment questions



MSC's service reshuffle tests India's ambitions to challenge Colombo's dominance in Indian Ocean transshipment

MSC has removed India's Vizhinjam port from its Middle East-Indian Subcontinent-Africa service (IAS), ending the carrier's rotation at the country's newest transshipment hub. Vizhinjam began commercial operations in July 2024 with ambitions to handle 1 million TEU annually in its initial phase, expanding to 6.2 million TEU in future developments (Container News). The withdrawal represents a setback for India's push to reduce reliance on foreign transshipment hubs, where approximately 75% of cargo is currently handled at ports such as Colombo, Singapore, and Port Klang.

Located just 10 nautical miles from major shipping lanes, Vizhinjam can accommodate ultra-large container vessels of up to 20,000-25,000 TEU (Maritime Executive). Despite these advantages, MSC's removal suggests operational or commercial considerations—potentially including vessel scheduling, service reliability, or cost efficiency—outweigh the port's geographic and infrastructure benefits. Adani Ports' competitive pricing strategy, offering significantly lower vessel-related charges than Colombo, appears not to have been sufficient to secure sustained carrier commitment at this stage.

However, single-carrier withdrawals from newly commissioned ports are not uncommon during the initial ramp-up phase. Industry observers note that early service rotations are often adjusted as carriers fine-tune network balance, transit times, and fleet deployment, particularly on long-haul services linking multiple regional markets. From this perspective, MSC's decision may reflect service-specific scheduling and optimisation factors rather than a definitive assessment of Vizhinjam's long-term commercial viability—especially given the port's limited operational track record since mid-2024.

Adani's Mundra Port Berths India's First Fully Laden VLCC



Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd has achieved a major milestone by successfully berthing India's first fully laden Very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC) at Mundra Port. The vessel, MT New Renown, arrived at the port carrying around 3.3 lakh cubic metres of crude oil.

With this operation, Mundra became the first port in the country to directly berth a fully loaded VLCC at a jetty, placing it among a small group of ports globally with this capability.

APSEZ stated that the berthing was completed in difficult marine conditions, including strong currents, high winds and challenging sea states.

The company's aid the operation demonstrated the experience and coordination of the port's marine and management teams.

The direct berthing of fully laden VLCCs marks an important change in India's crude oil logistics. Due to their deep draft and large size, such vessels were earlier handled using offshore Single Point Moorings (SPMs) or lightering operations.

APSEZ stated that Mundra's dedicated VLCC jetty now allows these vessels to berth directly, making crude handling safer, faster and more cost-efficient.

Mundra's VLCC jetty is connected to the HPCL Rajasthan Refinery at Barmer through a 489-kilometre crude oil pipeline. (Source: [MI News Network](#))



China's shipyards still lead the world, but US threats took a toll in 2025

Chinese shipbuilders saw their market share dip for the first time in five years in 2025, as uncertainty over US port fees roiled the industry

China retained its position as the world's top shipbuilder in 2025, but its market share declined for the first time in five years as US threats to impose port fees on Chinese-linked vessels sparked market turbulence.

Chinese shipyards secured 35.4 million compensated gross tonnage (CGT) of new vessel orders last year, down 35 per cent compared with 2024, the Chinese maritime news outlet eworldship.com reported on Thursday, citing data from shipping consultancy Clarksons.

China's shipbuilders also saw their global market share fall from 70 per cent in 2024 to 63 per cent last year – the first such drop recorded in half a decade, the report said.



South Korea, the world's second-largest shipbuilder, gained ground as its market share rose from 17 per cent in 2024 to 21 per cent last year, with its new vessel orders growing 8 per cent year on year to reach 11.6 million CGT.

But the industry's third-biggest player, Japan, saw new vessel orders plummet by nearly 53 per cent year on year to 2.8 million CGT in 2025, giving it a global market share of about 5 per cent.

The shipbuilding industry was thrown into disarray in early 2025 when Washington [unveiled a plan](#) to impose port fees targeting vessels owned, operated or built in China. The move prompted Beijing to [respond with its own countermeasures](#) later in the year.

Though both sides [agreed to suspend](#) their duties for one year after crunch talks in late October, the uncertainty [has sparked anxiety](#) in the shipping sector, which was reflected in ordering decisions: global new vessel orders fell 27 per cent year on year to 56.4 million CGT.

An advertisement for the INTERMODAL ASIA 2026 conference. The background is red. At the top left, it says "INTERMODAL ASIA 2026" and "22-24 April, Shanghai". Below that, it says "Announced!". Further down, it says "The Intermodal Asia 2026 Conference agenda is taking shape - starting with these key themes...". At the bottom left, there is a white button that says "Register now". On the right side, a man in a dark suit and patterned tie is speaking at a podium. The podium has a microphone and a small sign that says "INTERMODAL ASIA 2026". There are flowers on the podium.

Hambantota International Port records 175% cargo growth in 2025



Hambantota International Port recorded a remarkable 175 % year-on-year growth in total cargo volumes in 2025, handling 8.24 million metric tonnes, up from 3.0 million metric tonnes in 2024. The growth came despite a challenging year for the global port industry. The most significant increase was seen in container traffic. Container volumes rose sharply from 53,170 TEUs in 2024 to 428,036 TEUs in 2025, while containerised cargo tonnage climbed from 657,504 metric tonnes to 5.43 million metric tonnes, showing the port's rapid emergence as an important container gateway. The port said its Phase II expansion is expected to be completed by the end of 2026.

This will increase annual container handling capacity to around 2 million TEUs by adding four dedicated container berths and new equipment, including six quay cranes and sixteen rubber-tyred gantry cranes.

Other cargo types also posted solid gains. Roll-on/roll-off (RORO) units handled rose to 726,153 in 2025 from 579,362 a year earlier, with RORO tonnage increasing by 25 %. Bulk and break-bulk cargo volumes grew 32 % to 1.18 million metric tonnes. Oil and gas volumes were broadly stable at 661,131 metric tonnes. Wilson Qu, Chief Executive Officer of Hambantota International Port Group, said the performance was achieved amid global disruption and reflected confidence from customers, operational flexibility, and strong marketing efforts. The port entered 2026 with strong momentum and said it remained focused on sustaining growth and supporting trade, industry and regional economic development. Total cargo rose to 8.24 million tonnes in 2025, driven by sharp growth in container and RORO volumes.

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Tourist killed after two boats collide off Thailand's Phi Phi Islands



Rescuers assist one of the survivors of the collision between the tour boat *Korawich Marine 888* and the trawler *Pichai Samut 1* off Thailand's Phi Phi Islands on January 11, 2026. The incident left one Russian passenger dead while 21 other people suffered injuries. Phuket Tourist Police

One person was killed following a collision between a tour boat and a fishing vessel near the Phi Phi Islands in Thailand's Krabi province on Sunday, January 11.

Local authorities said the incident occurred at around 08:55 local time on Sunday when the tour boat *Korawich Marine 888* struck the trawler *Pichai Samut 1* in the Andaman Sea between Krabi and Phuket province.

The tour boat's bow was torn off, which then caused the vessel to capsize and sink within minutes. The 55 passengers and crew who were on the tour boat were thrown overboard as it capsized. All were subsequently pulled out of the water by responding police and rescue personnel.

Tragically, a female passenger who was found in critical condition succumbed to her injuries after being brought to hospital. The news was confirmed by both local media and Yegor Ivanov, the Russian Consul-General in Phuket, who said that the deceased victim was an 18-year-old Russian national.

The tour boat's three crewmembers and 21 other passengers suffered injuries, though none are considered to be life-threatening. The tour boat's passengers at the time of the collision included Russian, Kazakhstani and Uzbek nationals.

Police in Phuket and Krabi have begun investigating the incident while Russian Consulate staff and other Thai authorities have extended assistance to the survivors. (Source: BAIRD)

An advertisement for Laem Chabang Port. The top part features the Thai text 'ท่าเรือแหลมฉบัง' (Laem Chabang Port) in large white letters, followed by 'ยกระดับท่าเรือไทย' (Upgrade Thai Ports) and 'สู่ประตูการค้าโลก' (to the world trade gateway) in smaller blue and white text. Below this is the website 'lcp.port.co.th'. The background is a blue sky with a white logo of two stylized 'L' shapes. The bottom part of the ad shows a collage of images related to the port, including a large ship, a crane, and a terminal building.

Asian Logistics Sector

Da Nang approves plan key infrastructure developers at FTZ



The Da Nang FTZ is expected to contribute 17.9% to the city's gross regional domestic product and create 127,000 jobs by 2040, with total investment needs estimated at 40 trillion VND (1.6 billion USD).

Da Nang (VNS/VNA) - The central city of Da Nang has approved an investment promotion plan to attract strategic investors for infrastructure development at the 1,881-hectare Da Nang Free Trade Zone (FTZ), positioning it as the country's first pilot zone for applying so-called renewal institutions to drive a new economic growth model.

The management board of the Da Nang FTZ said the zone, designed with seven specialised functional areas including production, logistics, trade and services, digital technology, information technology and innovation hubs, would apply special mechanisms and preferential policies to establish a pioneering model for Vietnam's economic development.

It said the successful operation of the Da Nang FTZ would be used as a template for developing other free trade zones nationwide.

The FTZ is expected to offer the smoothest conditions yet for investors, operating a one-stop administrative mechanism covering land-use certificates, investment licences, construction, environmental procedures, customs and tax.

According to the management board, the city has already signed memorandums of understanding with several investors, including BRG Group, Sai Gon Da Nang Company, Phuong Trang Group, Thanh Binh Phu My Company, Terne Holdings Group, Imex Pan Pacific, Newtechco Group and Sun Group, for the implementation of functional sites within the zone.

Last year, Sun Group officially began construction of the fifth functional site, a 90ha hub for eco-tourism, high-quality health care services, luxury resorts, premium entertainment, duty-free trade and international-standard shopping at the foot of Ba Na Hills, with an investment of 800 billion VND (32 million USD).

Meanwhile, Sai Gon Da Nang Company has been preparing construction schedules for the second functional site, a logistics centre within the FTZ, located at the foot of the Hai Van Pass. The Da Nang FTZ is expected to contribute 17.9% to the city's gross regional domestic product and create 127,000 jobs by 2040, with total investment needs estimated at 40 trillion VND (1.6 billion USD).

It is intended to serve as an international freight transit hub, linked to Lien Chieu Port, Da Nang International Airport, Chu Lai Airport and the East-West Economic Corridor, with a long-term vision of integrating into the Asia-Pacific global supply chain.

The city also plans to inaugurate the first office of the International Finance Centre in January at the newly launched Da Nang Software Park No 2, under its strategic master plan for 2030–50.

Last year, a range of investors from Japan, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, the US and China, including Sumitomo, Hyundai E&C, KOGI Group, Bitdeer, Soilbuild and ST Telemedia, as well as the Shandong Enterprise Group Overseas Development Promotion Association, Topgene Biotechnology and Capstone Investment, conducted surveys and working visits at the Da Nang FTZ.

Meanwhile, US-based CT-Strategies and Switzerland's VinaLog Holding AG proposed advisory, logistics and infrastructure projects linked to the FTZ. The FTZ is expected to expand southwards to cover the existing Chu Lai Open Economic Zone.

Da Nang is seeking strategic investors with investment capital ranging from 2 trillion VND to 8 trillion VND for projects within the FTZ.(Source: Vietnam+)



Intra-Asia Trade

Vietnamese durian exports to Malaysia reach US\$2.6 million

Malaysia increased imports of durian from Vietnam during the first 11 months of 2025, despite being a major durian producer itself. Customs data show Malaysia imported US\$2.6 million worth of Vietnamese durian over the period, representing a fivefold increase compared with the previous year. This made Malaysia the fastest-growing destination market for Vietnamese durian during that timeframe, although it still accounted for a small share of total exports.

The second-largest increase in Vietnamese durian exports was recorded to Hong Kong, where shipments doubled to US\$47 million. Unlike Malaysia, Hong Kong does not produce durian and relies entirely on imports to supply domestic demand.

Dang Phuc Nguyen, secretary general of the Vietnam Fruit and Vegetable Association, said Malaysia typically imports Vietnamese durian to compensate for supply gaps outside its main domestic harvest season. "Malaysia usually imports Vietnamese durian to make up for a shortfall outside May-August, its main harvest period," he said, adding that Hong Kong imports due to the absence of local production.

Across all markets, Vietnam's durian exports continued to expand during most of the year. In the first 11 months of 2025, total durian export value rose 17% year on year to US\$3.65 billion. The majority of these volumes were shipped to China, which remains Vietnam's dominant export destination for durian.

However, export performance weakened toward the end of the period. In November, shipments declined sharply as China and another leading market, Thailand, reduced their durian imports. This drop highlighted the extent to which Vietnam's durian export sector remains dependent on a limited number of destination markets and is sensitive to changes in import demand.

The contrasting developments across Asian markets reflect differing production calendars and import requirements, with Vietnam continuing to supply durian during periods when other producing countries experience seasonal gaps or reduced availability.

Source: [VNExpress](#)

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