



Strengthening the Blue Economy for 75 Years



Sarbananda Sonowal
Union Cabinet Minister,
Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways

It gives me immense pride to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Directorate General of Shipping on the occasion of its 75th year of establishment. This achievement is not only a celebration of its rich legacy but also a recognition of its vital role in shaping India's maritime sector into one of enduring strength, innovation, and global relevance.

The 75th anniversary also reflects India's commitment under the mentorship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to advance our global mission under Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047. Anchored in the philosophy of Sagar Mala and Maritime India Vision 2030, the Directorate aims to play a transformative role in strengthening our Blue Economy and driving sustainable growth in alignment with the Panchamrit goals.

As we look ahead, the transition from the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS) to the Directorate General of Maritime Administration (DGMA) will mark a new chapter in India's maritime journey. I am confident that, this transformation will enhance India's maritime capabilities while upholding its core values of safety, sustainability, and innovation. I wish the Directorate continued success in its transformative endeavours.
Jai Hind.

A testament to Enduring Strength



Shantanu Thakur
Minister of State,
Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways

As we observe the 75th year of the Directorate General of Shipping's establishment, I extend my sincere appreciation to all those who have shaped its journey over the decades. Serving as one of the forerunners of India's maritime administration, the Directorate has upheld great standards of regulatory oversight, safety, and seafarer welfare. Its evolution mirrors India's vision for a self-reliant, globally engaged maritime sector. This milestone stands as a testament to its institutional strength and continued relevance in a rapidly changing maritime landscape. I am confident that the Directorate will remain a key enabler in advancing India's maritime goals in the years ahead.

Advancing Indian Shipping Towards Innovation



T K Ramachandran, IAS,
Secretary,
Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways

The 75th anniversary of the Directorate General of Shipping is a momentous milestone in India's maritime journey and a tribute to the administrative vision that has shaped it into one of a national maritime governance. Established in 1949, the Directorate has evolved from a modest regulatory body into a dynamic and forward-looking maritime administration, balancing regulation with facilitation, and aligning national priorities with international obligations. Its steadfast commitment to safety at sea, adherence to global conventions, and focus on the welfare of Indian seafarers have earned it enduring respect. Over the decades, it has demonstrated remarkable foresight embracing digital transformation, promoting sustainability, and strengthening institutional capacity. As we celebrate this occasion, we salute the generations of dedicated officers and staff whose professionalism and integrity have defined its legacy, and we extend our deepest appreciation to the Directorate for its unwavering service to the nation and its proficiency in steering Indian shipping toward a future anchored in resilience.



Shyam Jagannathan, IAS,
Director General of Shipping, DGS

As the Directorate General of Shipping completes 75 years, Director General Shyam Jagannathan creates a vision that blends legacy with innovation, sustainability, and global ambition

From Ancient Harbours to Global Hub: India's Maritime rise

India's maritime sector, rooted in a legacy that dates back to the Harappan civilisation, aims to shape the nation's trade and economic growth. From the ancient port of Lothal to the present-day network of 12 major and over 200 non-major ports, the seas have long been India's gateways to prosperity. Recognising this historical strength, the government has in recent years placed maritime infrastructure at the core of its growth agenda, aligning it with the vision of a self-reliant India.

Together, these frameworks signal India's determination to become a professional in safe, sustainable and technologically advanced maritime development. The Sagarmala programme, launched in 2015, has been a turning point, promoting port-led development through modernisation, enhanced connectivity and coastal community upliftment. Alongside, reforms such as the Major Port Authorities Act 2021 have given ports greater operational autonomy, enabling them to attract private investment and compete globally.

India's 11,099 kilometres of coastline has witnessed centuries of maritime heritage. The Rig Veda carries the earliest references to nautical operations, while the Indus Valley Civilisation engaged in sea trade with Mesopotamia as far back as 3300 BCE. This legacy will be mirrored in the National Maritime Heritage Complex at Lothal, where the world's first known dry dock, dating to 2400 BCE, is preserved. The traditions of the Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas, Chatrapathi Shivaji Maharaj's naval power, and India's continuing maritime engagement reinforce its historic seafaring identity.

This renewed focus has already begun to show results, with Indian ports recording improved efficiency and growing cargo volumes, placing the country among the top 20 maritime nations. Global collaboration has been another key driver. Through strategic partnerships in port development, shipbuilding and logistics, India is positioning itself as one of a hub in the Indo-Pacific maritime network. Initiatives such as the Gati Shakti programme and multimodal logistics parks are further integrating ports with highways, railways and inland waterways, reducing logistics costs and boosting competitiveness.

The government's Maritime India Vision 2030 and the broader Amrit Kaal blueprint look to the future, aiming to make India a leading maritime nation with green, smart and technologically advanced ports. Sustainability is central to this roadmap, with emphasis on renewable energy, electrification of port operations and a shift towards cleaner fuels.

India's seas, once the foundation of its ancient prosperity, are now being harnessed to secure its economic future. As the nation strengthens its ports, builds global linkages and invests in innovation, its maritime sector is set to become a cornerstone of growth, ensuring India's rightful place in the global trade order.

75 Years of the Directorate General of Shipping: A Maritime Heritage

Safeguarding seas and shaping futures, DG Shipping has driven India's maritime growth with vision and vigilance

The Directorate General of Shipping established on 1 September 1949, has served as one of India's maritime authority for seventy five years. Since its inception, it has been entrusted with the regulation of merchant shipping, the promotion of maritime safety and security, the protection of the marine environment, and the welfare of Indian seafarers, making it one of the pioneers of India's maritime governance.

and certification, ensures compliance with shipping legislation, regulates seafarer training and welfare, enforces Port State and Flag State control, and investigates marine casualties. It also plays a critical role in preventing marine pollution while representing India's maritime interests at global forums, including the International Maritime Organization.



Sushil Mansing Khopde, IPS,
Additional Director General of Shipping, DGS

1919, SS Loyalty, the first Indian-owned ship, sailed from Mumbai to London. In 1929, the Mercantile Marine Departments in Mumbai and Kolkata were established to implement the first SOLAS and Load Line Conventions. Two decades later, in 1949, the Directorate General of Shipping was created, ushering in a new era of structured maritime governance. In 2024, its Diamond Jubilee celebrations marked seventy five years of service to the nation.

By setting great training standards, enhancing institutional capacity, and coordinating responses to piracy, pollution, and maritime emergencies, DGS has remained a sentinel of India's maritime future. The Platinum Jubilee in 2025 is being celebrated with a series of initiatives. The conferences Jalasya Rakṣā, Janasya Surakṣā (11 August 2025) and Shikṣita Nāvikaḥ, Saśakta Saṁsthānam, Surakṣita Samudraḥ (25 August 2025) addressed maritime security and seafarer welfare. The forthcoming Samudra Śuddhiḥ Rāṣṭrasya Vṛiddhiḥ (10 October) will highlight ship

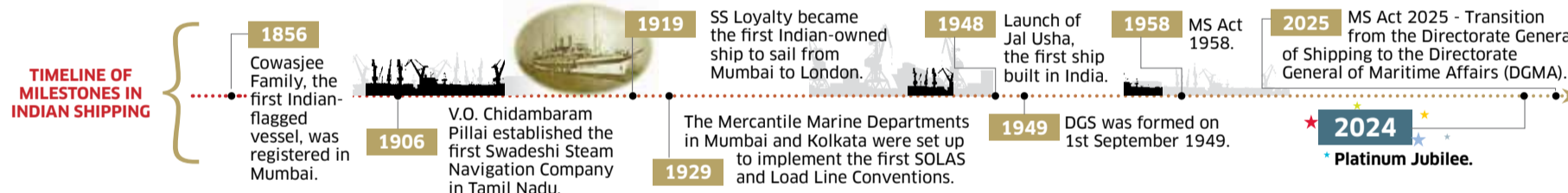
recycling, circular economy, and sustainable shipping. On 4 September, a commemorative postage stamp will be issued with the inauguration of the maritime exhibition "75 Years of Sea and Service" in Mumbai along with the release of a Coffee Table book. A Video Documentary will be telecasted during mid September on television news channel.

The Directorate's mandate spans a wide spectrum of responsibilities. It oversees ship registration

The nation's maritime journey is enriched with milestones. In 1856, the first Indian-flagged vessel, Cowasjee Family, was registered in Mumbai. In

Over time, the shipping sector has expanded substantially under the Directorate's stewardship.

Seventy five years of the Directorate General of Shipping is both a tribute to its legacy and a reaffirmation of its enduring mission to ensure safe, secure, and sustainable shipping.



Beyond Rules and Regulations: The Human Face of Shipping Administration

When the 2004 tsunami struck the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Ajith Sukumaran of the Directorate General of Shipping was on the ground amid shattered jetties and stranded vessels. Coordinating emergency sailings and restoring supply lines, he realised maritime administration was not about files or protocol but about safeguarding lives and livelihoods in their most vulnerable moments.



Ajith Sukumaran
Chief Surveyor-cum-Addl. DG (Tech.), DGS

India's survey and certification regimes, ensuring Indian-flagged ships meet international standards from construction through operation. He has seen the Directorate translate international conventions into national practice, from ballast water management to MARPOL amendments, while also driving India's achievements in the Hong Kong Convention on ship recycling. Today, he

That conviction has guided Sukumaran through more than twenty-three years in the DGS following his career at sea. "I often joke that my blood must carry more Acts, Rules, Conventions and Regulations than haemoglobin," he says, noting that in shipping, rules are not hurdles but lifelines, they are crafted to protect seafarers, preserve the environment, and sustain public trust.

As he prepares to retire, Sukumaran hopes the next generation of officers will carry forward this ethos, blending technical expertise with compassion to strengthen India's maritime resilience in an evolving global order. He believes that future leaders must remain adaptive to technological disruptions, environmental imperatives, and shifting trade dynamics, while never losing sight of the human dimension that underpins seafaring.

Navigating Towards Maritime Amrit Kaal: The Nautical Wing's Roadmap

The Nautical Wing of the Directorate General of Shipping has long served as the backbone of India's maritime governance, ensuring safety, regulatory compliance, and international cooperation since its inception in 1949. Its core functions span ship registration, promotion of Indian tonnage, enforcement of safety and security norms, and implementation of major conventions such as SOLAS, COLREGS, and the Civil Liability Conventions.



Capt. S I Abul Kalam Azad
Nautical Advisor-cum-Addl. DG (Tech.) (i/c), DGS

India's shipping registry today comprises 1,580 vessels with national tonnage at a record 14 million GT. With a goal to join among the world's top ten ship-owning nations by 2030, the Directorate aims to add at least one million GT each year. An advanced e-governance platform to streamline ship registration, including mortgage processes, is due for activation in October 2025. In 2024 alone, over 4,000 Certificates

of Competency for deck officers and 10,800 Certificates of Proficiency for deck ratings were issued. Also, a digital examination system was piloted in Noida from April 2025 and will be operational nationwide by March 2026. The Nautical Wing is also responsible to manage marine medical standards through over 600 approved doctors, drives marine environmental protection, promotes salvage

hubs, and delivers 24x7 Maritime Assistance Services. The wing also has the mandate to coordinate emergency response and SAR operations with the Indian Coast Guard and also operates the LRIT National Data Centre. This Data Centre caters to both Indian and certain neighbouring countries. The implementation of the ISPS Code to secure ships and port infrastructure is another important function of this wing. The Directorate's initiatives extend to also coordinating with insurers on P&I cover for vessels and oversight of Maritime Single Window (MSW) portal and casualty investigation.

As the Directorate approaches 75 years of service, these important initiatives reflect its Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 which is anchored in seamanship, safety, and the enduring contribution of India's ships and seafarers.



Pradeep Sudhakar K.
Chief Ship Surveyor-cum-Joint DG (Tech.) (i/c), DGS

Global Standards Anchored in Indian Seas

When oil was first struck in Mumbai High in the 1970s, India's offshore frontier suddenly expanded. Exploration platforms, drilling rigs and support vessels multiplied, opening vast opportunities for energy and trade, but they also introduced serious risks. Safeguarding these operations soon became a national priority, and the Directorate General of Shipping stepped into that responsibility with resolve.

From those early days, the Directorate has steadily embedded internationally recognised safety codes into India's maritime framework. The Special Purpose Ships (SPS) Code for diving, cable-laying and support vessels, and the Mobile Offshore Drilling Unit (MODU) Code for rigs and drill ships, were formally integrated into Indian practice in the early 2000s. This alignment with global standards ensured that offshore

assets operated to the highest safety benchmarks while reinforcing India's standing as a responsible maritime nation. Much of this work has unfolded away from public view. Behind the scenes, DGS officers have carried out inspections, vessel certifications and compliance tracking with quiet consistency. They have coordinated audits, guided operators, and ensured that safety was never compromised.

In times of natural calamity, whether it is cyclonic storms or emergencies offshore, the Directorate has taken on an active role in coordinating timely evacuations and maintaining vital supply lines in partnership with coastal authorities and industry stakeholders. Looking ahead, the Directorate is broadening its scope by implementing the Industrial Personnel (IP) Code and certifying indigenous High Speed Passenger

Crafts under the HSC Code 2000 for personnel transfers. Regular stakeholder consultations, training initiatives and efforts at international harmonisation signal its future-focused approach. Seventy-five years on, the DGS's legacy is measured not only in rules and policies but in thousands of lives protected, safe voyages completed, and an offshore sector resilient enough to power India's maritime growth.

SHIP RECYCLING

India's Ship Recycling: Turning Waste into Wealth

Gopikrishna C
 Engineer & Ship Surveyor-cum-Deputy Director General (Tech.), DGS

India's ship recycling sector has emerged as a global model of sustainability, turning end-of-life vessels into engines of resource recovery, employment, and climate gains. As the Directorate marks its 75th anniversary, this vital industry comes into renewed focus.

Personally, for marine engineers who have sailed and risen from key responsibility of maintenance to the role of an surveyor to oversee sea worthiness of vessels, looking after the portfolio of ship recycling is way different. A ship is more than a machine; it is a trusted companion through voyages. Guiding it through its end-of-life stage is therefore not only a task of professional responsibility but also a sentimental ordinal.

Now referred as "ship recycling" in lieu of "ship breaking," considering the positivity it brings symbolising rebirth of a vessel paving the way to a circular economy with recovery rate of 95-98% of a vessel's tonnage. While developed nations see it as a liability, India sees it as an opportunity with resource recovery, energy savings, climate gains and jobs.

The industry not only contributes to the domestic steel sector, supplying cheaper, energy efficient recycled steel but also reduces pressure on natural resources with 30,000 direct and 1,50,000 indirect jobs, providing livelihood for migrant workers with improved access to healthcare, education and community facilities.



TO MANY SEAFARERS, A SHIP IS MORE THAN A MACHINE; IT IS A TRUSTED COMPANION THROUGH VOYAGES

Safety and environmental challenges leads to reform. Following a petition, the Honorable Supreme Court prompted a stricter oversight which resulted in the Ship Breaking Code, 2013 aligned with the Hong Kong International Convention (HKC). India ratified HKC in November 2019, enacted the Recycling of Ships Act the same year, and in October 2020 DGS was notified as the National Authority for Ship Recycling. The Recycling of Ships Rules, 2021, further reinforced this framework and regulations are currently in the process of notification.

With HKC entering into force on 26th June 2025, India is uniquely poised to lead the global ship recycling market.

With 115 yards having HKC Statement of Compliance, having a recycling capacity of approximately 4.5 million LDT, India plans to double this capacity by end of this decade.

This sector aligns India's climate commitments and the UN Sustainable Development Goals SDG 8 (Decent Work), SDG 9 (Industry and Infrastructure), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption), SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 14 (Life Below Water). By linking environmental stewardship with socio economic benefits, India has demonstrated sustainable development in practice.

More than a scrapyards, India's ship recycling yards represent a global solution transforming waste into wealth while balancing environmental, social and economic priorities fulfilling the objectives of Country's Maritime India Vision 2030. As DGS celebrates 75 years of implementing IMO conventions under MoPSW India's recycling sector stands as a beacon of progress ready to lead the world towards a Greener, Safer & Sustainable maritime future.

GREEN SHIPPING

India's Maritime Industry Undergoes Shift Towards Sustainable Technologies and Practices

Satish Kamath
 Deputy Chief Surveyor-cum-Senior Deputy Director General (Tech.), DGS

India's maritime sector stands at a pivotal juncture, actively pursuing a transformative journey towards environmental sustainability. At the core of this shift lies the proposed National Green Shipping Policy (NGSP), jointly developed by DGS, Lloyd's Register and TERI. Aligned with the Panchamrit goals and the Maritime India Vision (MIV) 2030 and Maritime Amrit Kal Vision (MAKV) 2047 the policy charts pathways for Regulatory upgrades, Technology integration, Green finance and international collaboration.

As the Directorate General of Shipping marks 75 years of service, India's maritime development



stands as a defining milestone in its journey. Complementing this, the Future Fuel Strategy (FFS) by the Indian Register of Shipping outlines a multi-fuel roadmap incorporating green hydrogen, methanol, ammonia, biofuels, and electrification. By 2050, conventional marine fuel use will fall sharply, supported by bunkering

facilities, port electrification, CO₂ reception centres of 13 million tonnes annually, and even exploration of nuclear propulsion.

India is also advancing Green Corridors, including a proposed route with Singapore, leveraging hydrogen hubs at Kandla, Paradip, and Tuticorin. Digital compliance is reinforced through the Swachh

Sagar portal, mandating EEXI, CII, single-use plastic reduction, and e-bunker delivery notes.

Regulatory reforms include age norms for Indian-flagged ships and the proposed Sustainability Indexing of Ships (SIS), offering performance-based sustainability evaluation. Guidelines for LNG bunkering and draft biofuel standards address long-standing regulatory gaps.

On research, the planned Indian Ocean Centre of Excellence in Mumbai will lead innovation and capacity-building.

Marking its 75th year, the DGS highlights India's holistic approach towards policy, fuels, infrastructure, regulation, and international cooperation, thereby positioning the nation as one of the leader in sustainable, future-ready shipping.

SHIP BUILDING

Offshore Safety First: DGS' Crucial Role in Embedding Global Codes in Indian Waters

Nebu Oommen
 Ship Surveyor-cum-Deputy Director General (Tech.), DGS

The Directorate General of Shipping has been central to regulating and ensuring safe offshore vessel operations, evolving from a maritime administrator into a proactive custodian of safety by embedding international frameworks such as the Special Purpose Ships (SPS) Code, the Mobile Offshore Drilling Unit (MODU) Code, the Industrial Personnel (IP) Code and the High-Speed Craft (HSC) Code into India's maritime framework. This enduring role, shaped over decades of oversight and innovation, comes into sharper focus as

the organisation marks 75 years of service.

India's offshore activities gained momentum in the 1970s following the discovery of oil at Mumbai High. As drilling platforms, support vessels and offshore units multiplied, structured safety oversight became essential. Rising to this challenge, DGS began aligning policies with International Maritime Organization (IMO) codes from the early 2000s. The SPS Code governs vessels engaged in specialised offshore services like diving and cable laying, while the MODU Code sets rigorous safety standards for mobile drilling platforms. These were contextualised for Indian conditions through directives, circulars and close



coordination with classification societies.

Beyond regulation, DGS has ensured safe operations

through audits, inspections, crew compliance monitoring and timely crisis response. During cyclones and natural

calamities, its officers have played a pivotal role in coordinating evacuations and supporting emergency operations with coastal authorities.

Today, the Directorate is preparing for the future with the adoption of the new IP Code and greater use of indigenous high-speed passenger craft under the HSC Code for personnel transfer. Stakeholder consultations, capacity building and international collaboration remain central to its evolving mandate.

As it marks this milestone, DGS' legacy is not just written in policies but in countless safe voyages, protected lives and resilient operations—continuing to steer India's offshore future with integrity and foresight.

EXAMINATION

75 Years of Anchoring Competence and Global Trust

Praveen Nair
 Deputy Chief Surveyor-cum-Senior Deputy Director General (Tech.), DGS

India's reputation for maritime quality rests on the strength of its examination and certification system, which has long ensured seafarers sail with competence, integrity, and global trust. The International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), adopted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), aims to set the global benchmark. In India, the DGS in 75 years has upheld



these norms through comprehensive certification combining training, experience, and examinations.

From the training of 50 nautical cadets on I.M.M.T.S. DUFFERIN in

1927, the establishment of Mercantile Marine Departments in 1929, and the formalisation of the DGS in 1949, the mission has remained constant: to produce great seafarers. Today,

A MILESTONE HAS BEEN THE DIGITISATION OF THE COC EXAMINATION SYSTEM, IMPROVING EFFICIENCY, TRANSPARENCY, AND CREDIBILITY

the DGS oversees Certificates of Competency (CoC) for officers, Proficiency Certificates in safety, and Watchkeeping Certificates. Around 63 written and 23 oral exams are held for Marine Engineer Officers, 47 for Nautical grades, and 40 for dredge and fishing categories—ensuring safety and global demand for Indian seafarers.

The DGS has reinforced

maritime training through the All-India Exit Exam, mandatory online STCW tests, and digitised CoC examinations with computer-based assessments. These reforms boost transparency and credibility, preparing Indian seafarers to meet global standards while aligning with digitalisation, automation, and sustainability shaping the future of the maritime industry.

MMD KOCHI

A Silent Pillar of Maritime Governance on India's Southwestern Coast

J Senthil Kumar
 Principal Officer, MMD Kochi, DGS

The Mercantile Marine Department (MMD) of Kochi remains a cornerstone of maritime governance along India's southwestern seaboard. As a pivotal regional office under the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS), MMD Kochi has shaped the maritime landscape of the Malabar Coast for decades. Headed by a Principal Officer and supported by a cadre of specialised surveyors and staff, the department has diligently enforced Merchant Shipping laws and international conventions governing the nation's vital shipping industry.

Its supervisory remit extends beyond Kochi to subordinate offices such as MMD Mangalore, ensuring consistent safety and certification standards across the southern maritime zones. Through rigorous audits, inspections and certification processes, MMD Kochi has upheld India's global reputation for maritime safety.

Key functions include comprehensive ship surveys, ranging from annual and intermediate inspections to renewal examinations, culminating in the issue of certificates such as Safety Construction, Safety Equipment and Pollution Prevention Certificates. Its role in passenger vessel certification is particularly significant, ensuring compliance with the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Convention and Load Line regulations. Structural integrity, machinery, navigational equipment and safety systems are all subject to meticulous scrutiny.

Equally important is the department's work in seafarer competency. Examinations for officers and ratings in written, oral and practical form make sure that Indian seafarers continue to be among the most regarded professionals worldwide.

Heritage plays a role too. The Merchant Navy Club, established in 1943 on Willingdon Island and operating under MMD Kochi, offers affordable accommodation, dining and recreational facilities, long serving



as a home-from-home for generations of seafarers.

As a designated Port State Control authority, MMD Kochi inspects foreign vessels calling at Indian ports to ensure compliance with SOLAS, MARPOL and other conventions. By detaining substandard ships, it has helped reduce safety and environmental risks. During the COVID-19 pandemic, innovative protocols for remote inspections and document verification kept regulatory oversight intact despite restrictions.

Looking ahead, MMD Kochi is pursuing digital transformation with the aim of achieving paperless operations by 2026. It is also developing inspection protocols for green technologies, enhancing maritime security through advanced risk assessments, and collaborating on a "Maritime Innovation Hub" to test emerging technologies. In addition, new inspection protocols address seafarer welfare beyond the Maritime Labour Convention, with a focus on mental health and quality of life.

As global trade pivots towards the Indian Ocean, MMD Kochi's integrated frameworks have positioned the city as a preferred port of call, reinforcing India's maritime influence in the region.

INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION

Internal Initiatives of Directorate to Strengthen India's Maritime Governance

Deependra Singh Bisen
 Deputy Director General of Shipping, DGS

Behind the nation's robust maritime sector lies the quiet but decisive work of the DGS internal Administration which continues to strengthen India's maritime governance through sustainability initiatives, infrastructure expansion, and support for seafarers.

The Directorate has been using ecofriendly practices. Sixteen electric vehicles have replaced fuel-driven cars, cutting annual CO₂ emissions by 20.48 tonnes, while rooftop solar plants with 0.06 MW capacity across allied offices reduce



reliance on grid power. These steps align with India's decarbonisation roadmap, the National Solar Mission, and Maritime India Vision 2030.

Institutional expansion has also been prioritised. New Mercantile Marine Department (MMD) offices at Visakhapatnam and Mangalore now serve seafarers with modern certification, inspection, and registration facilities, while a regional DGS office at GIFT City

marks India's first maritime outpost within an International Financial Services Centre, supporting ship leasing and finance.

The Directorate also provides crucial administrative support for global forums, including India Maritime Week and IMO events, alongside operational backbone functions such as procurement, travel facilitation through an MoU with Balmer Lawrie, and budget planning.

Equally significant are its community and environmental initiatives. The bamboo plantation drive, "Ek Ped Maa Ke Nam," and large-scale "Swachhata Hi Seva" beach clean-ups highlight its commitment to climate action and public awareness.

These efforts of the Directorate culminated in the 15th edition of the Day of the Seafarer, themed "Our Ocean, Our Obligation, Our Opportunity." The event featured the felicitation of meritorious seafarers, the launch of a collaborative E-Library by leading maritime bodies, the release of the NMDC Souvenir 2025, and a panel discussion on training, safety, skilling, and placement—setting a forward-looking agenda for the maritime sector.

SUPPORTED BY



ISPS

Stronger Shores: How ISPS Achievements Sets the Stage for India's Proposed BOPS

Capt. Nitin Mukesh
 Deputy Nautical Advisor-cum Senior Deputy Director General (Tech.), DGS



In the sprawling theatre of India's maritime trade, security is as much about unseen vigilance as it is about visible infrastructure. The International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code has been India's frontline defence for two decades, and a proposed Bureau of Port Security (BoPS) is now set to carry that legacy.

The ISPS Code was born from tragedy. After the 9/11 attacks, the International Maritime Organization adopted the code in 2002 to shield global ports and vessels from terrorism, piracy, and sabotage. On 4 July 2003, the Ministry of Shipping designated the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS) as India's Designated Authority to implement the code. With the global compliance deadline of 1 July 2004 looming, DGS led a nationwide mobilisation by validating security plans, training officers, inspecting facilities, and coordinating multiple agencies.

The challenge went beyond technical compliance. While major ports were required to comply with standardised

security protocols, private jetties, oil terminals, and non-major ports, many of with minimal surveillance were compelled to develop security infrastructure from the ground up. Through workshops, outreach, and the proposed introduction of the Ship and Port Facility Security (SPFS) digital module, DGS is working to ensure even the most remote facilities meet ISPS standards.

Merchant Shipping (Ships and Port Facility Security) Rules embedded ISPS principles into Indian law, reinforcing a culture of security that extends from vibrant container hubs to modest fishing jetties.

Yet, evolving threats from cyber intrusions and underwater drones to AI-driven sabotage demand an even

more integrated approach. Here, the proposed Bureau of Port Security offers the next leap. Envisioned as a centralised body under DGS, BoPS would bridge the gap between major and minor ports, classify port risk levels, and coordinate maritime incident responses without undermining state jurisdiction.

Today, multiple agencies like the customs, immigration, CISF, state police operate under different frameworks and BoPS aims to harmonise these efforts into a single point of coordination, ensuring that no port, however remote, falls outside a unified national security net. With this, India's maritime security journey reflects a shift from reactive protection to proactive preparedness.

SHIP REGISTRATION

Maritime Reforms for Economic Resilience: Augmenting India's Flag Vessel Fleet

A new wave of opportunity under the Indian flag

Capt. Anish Joseph
 Deputy Nautical Advisor -cum Senior Deputy Director General (Tech.), DGS

India is setting a decisive course toward strengthening its maritime sector by reforming vessel registration laws and leveraging financial innovation through the International Financial Services Centre at GIFT City. The Merchant Shipping Act 2025, together with policy shifts at the financial and regulatory level, aims to expand the national fleet, reduce foreign exchange outflow, and reposition India as a significant maritime economic power by 2047.

India's merchandise trade has seen remarkable growth, with a value exceeding about \$1.2 trillion annually. However, a significant portion of this trade is carried out by foreign-flagged vessels, making it to a substantial economic drain. The shipping costs alone account for approximately \$105 billion, or about 10 percent of India's total merchandise trade value. Out of this estimated \$105 billion in freight expenditure, Indian shipping companies account for merely around \$5 billion, indicating that the vast majority of freight earnings are accrued by foreign operators. This underscores the urgent need to enhance India's shipping capabilities, as relying on foreign ships for the bulk of cargo transportation not only inflates costs but also limits the economic benefits that could accrue from operating under Indian-flagged vessels. Strengthening the Indian fleet and

enabling Indian companies to take a larger share of this maritime trade is critical for boosting economic efficiency and reducing foreign exchange outflows.

The Merchant Shipping Act 2025, seeks to address this longstanding gap through a new set of progressive provisions. The Act includes specific provisions aimed at facilitating an increase in Indian flagged tonnage. Furthermore, Non-Resident Indians, Overseas Citizens of India, Joint ventures, and foreign corporate bodies can now own vessels under the Indian flag, provided Indian control is retained. This change is expected to attract new investment into ship acquisition and operations under the Indian registry.

Equally transformative is the Act's inclusion of Bareboat Charter cum Demise registration. This provision enables Indian companies to operate and eventually own foreign vessels under the Indian flag. Additionally, by eliminating the requirement of bringing the vessel at an Indian port for final registration, the reform removes a key procedural bottleneck. The intent towards these initiatives are clear, to make the Indian registry as competitive and accessible as one of the world's leading flag registries.

Towards this goal, the GIFT City's emerging role in this ecosystem further strengthens the government's vision. With a growing number of vessels already registered by ship leasing companies based in the IFSC, the centre has proven its potential as a cost effective and globally competitive registration hub. Shipowners

1919: SS Loyalty became the first Indian-owned ship to sail from Mumbai to London.



Vessels from the requirement of filing Export Declaration Forms, provided they are re-imported into India. This long-awaited reform simplifies compliance and removes a major operational hurdle for Indian maritime service providers.

Additionally, the RBI has permitted advance remittance of up to USD 50 million for import of ships without the need for a bank guarantee or irrevocable standby letter of credit, putting the maritime sector on par with aviation in terms of financial facilitation. These steps reflect the government's commitment under the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 and signal India's readiness to emerge as one of a strategic operational base for global shipping ventures.

Furthermore, public sector coordination with sectors such as petroleum, steel, and fertilisers has revealed demand for over two hundred new Indian flagged vessels. The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways estimates this as a Rs 1.3 lakh crore opportunity that can generate jobs, boost coastal shipping, and strengthen national resilience in maritime logistics.

Support from GIFT City is already helping bring more vessels under the Indian flag, a trend that will be further strengthened in the Merchant Shipping Act 2025. These measures are expected to reduce dependence on foreign ships, conserve foreign exchange, and promote Indian employment and trade. Together, they mark an important move towards building a stronger and more self-reliant maritime sector, one that aligns with India's long term strategic and economic goals.

SAFETY

A Commitment to Preparedness and Resilience

Capt. Harinder Singh
 Nautical Surveyor-cum Deputy Director General (Tech.), DGS

As the Directorate General of Shipping completes 75 years of maritime leadership, it is an honour to reflect on the significant strides made in casualty response, risk mitigation, and maritime safety. The

Casualty Branch stands among the fore-runners of India's strategic and operational response reflecting an unwavering commitment to enhancing safety, ensuring timely response to accidents, and preserving human life, marine assets, and the marine environment.

Casualty management is a complex and evolving responsibility. At its core lies the principle of preparedness;

anticipating risks, planning contingencies, and ensuring rapid, coordinated action. The Casualty Branch has played a crucial role in driving systemic improvements through policy development, investigations, inter-agency collaboration, and real-time coordination with salvage responders, port authorities, and coastal States. Over the past decade, India has



witnessed increasing complexity in marine casualties, driven by heavier traffic, adverse weather events, and growing offshore activity. Under the stewardship of the Directorate, and with a focus on preventive and remedial action, the Casualty Branch has evolved into a dynamic coordinating centre that leads timely investigations, ensures enforcement of international conventions, and recommends systemic improvements. The branch has integrated some of the best international practices into national protocols, strengthen reporting mechanisms, and develop standard operating procedures for casualty response.

Mitigating the risk of pollution, safeguarding seafarers, and preserving navigational safety are critical to our mandate. With growing

maritime traffic, particularly in sensitive coastal areas and high-density shipping lanes, the Directorate's focus has shifted towards proactive risk reduction, use of technology in monitoring, and building institutional response capacity.

Looking ahead, the Casualty Branch remains committed to strengthening India's casualty response framework through legislative support, partnerships with the Indian Coast Guard, Indian Navy, Ports and international salvage experts. The 75-year legacy of the DGS is a reminder that maritime safety is not just a statutory obligation, it is a responsibility we carry with purpose, vigilance, and resolve.

As we commemorate this milestone, we rededicate ourselves to safer seas and resilient maritime futures.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

International Cooperation at Directorate The Nerve Centre of India's Maritime Diplomacy

Aniruddha Chaki
 Deputy Chief Surveyor-cum-Senior Deputy Director General (Tech.), DGS

From the IMO's chambers in London to coastal agreements across the Indian Ocean, India's maritime voice carries weight. At the heart of this influence lies the International Cooperation initiatives of the Directorate General of Shipping. At its core, the Directorate ensures sustained engagement with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Nations agency regulating global shipping, alongside



the International Labour Organization, the European Maritime Safety Agency, regional MoUs such as Paris, Tokyo and Indian Ocean, as well as maritime administrations of

foreign flag states and Indian High Commissions worldwide.

Operating as a strategic nerve centre, it manages India's participation in IMO meetings, prepares technical papers, and ensures compliance with international conventions. Through active engagement in IMO committees, India has consistently voiced the concerns of developing maritime nations while promoting equitable regulation.

The Directorate also plays a pivotal role in bilateral maritime agreements, including MoUs and Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs), supporting seafarer mobility and international cooperation. Shadow Committees com-

prising experts and stakeholders provide critical technical input, while the Directorate coordinates capacity-building initiatives with BIMSTEC and IORA partners. Notably, during the IMO Member State Audit Scheme (IMSAS) in early 2024, India showcased robust implementation of IMO instruments across flag, port and coastal state responsibilities.

Looking ahead, the Directorate aims to strengthen India's maritime voice, symbolising commitment to global governance, sustainable shipping, and regional collaboration thereby honouring 75 years of resilience and foresight in Indian shipping.

MMD CHENNAI

Strengthening Global Maritime Cooperation and Supporting Regional Development



Shri Killi Mohana Rao
 Principal Officer, MMD Chennai, DGS

Nestled along the Coromandel Coast, the Mercantile Marine Department, Chennai, stands amongst the pioneers of India's maritime regulatory framework on the east coast. Established in 1929, it is among the three oldest MMDs in the country operating alongside Mumbai and Kolkata. It was set up to implement international maritime conventions such as SOLAS, Load Line and Tonnage, amongst others within its region of operation.

MMD Chennai today ensures that vessels, seafarers and ports comply with maritime standards of safety, security and pollution prevention. Guided by the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958, its core functions span ship registration and tonnage measurement, vessel surveys and audits under PSC, FSC, MLC, ISPS and ISM regulations, port audits and inspections, seafarer assessment, certification of competency and proficiency, conduct of preliminary inquiries under Section 359, inspection of Maritime Training Institutes, and approval of LSA and FFA service stations.

MMD Chennai extends its reach through subordinate offices at Visakhapatnam and Tuticorin, along with the Seamen's Employment and Welfare Offices in Chennai and the Regional Office (Sails) at Tuticorin. A notable facility under its administration is the Seafarers Club in Chennai which is a holistic

INDIA'S UNINTERRUPTED ELECTION TO CATEGORY B OF THE IMO COUNCIL SINCE ITS INCEPTION REFLECTS THIS INFLUENCE

space offering lodging, study rooms and a 150-seat auditorium, designed to support India's seafarers during their time ashore.

In July 2025, the MMD Visakhapatnam office was inaugurated enhancing regional accessibility. Seafarer examinations commenced here in April 2025, with engine-grade examinations already underway and nautical-grade to begin from August 2025. Certification processes have been accelerated, with faster release of MEO Class results and timely issuance of CoCs and DCEs. The Department has also embraced digital transformation through e-Office implementation, boosting transparency and efficiency.

MMD Chennai is scaling up capacity with plans to expand examination facilities in Chennai, upgrade MMD Visakhapatnam to a Principal Officer-level office, and establish a new MMD at Kakinada to strengthen its presence near key eastern ports. From legacy to leadership, MMD Chennai continues to steer India's maritime future with integrity, innovation and dedication to seafarer welfare.

MMD KANDLA

Guardians of Shipping Safety and Port Oversight

Capt. Santhosh Kumar Darokar
 Principal Officer, MMD Kandla, DGS

Gujarat is perfectly poised to herald a new era of development and prosperity in the country, a role it is destined to fulfil considering its rich maritime heritage of more than 4,500 years. A conglomeration of shipbuilding, ship recycling and cargo movement across 42 ports makes Gujarat a preferred one-stop destination for port-led growth and industrialisation.

The state's coastline, stretching from Lakhpat to Umbergaon, is a thriving fishing industry, contributing nearly 20 per cent to India's fish production. India's maritime history predates Western civilisation, with Lothal's tidal dock, built around 2300 BCE. Today, over 200 sailing vessels continue trade between the Middle East and Gujarat's Salaya and Mandvi.



Inauguration of MMD Kandla office by Gautam Chatterjee, IAS in January 2014

Gujarat is said to be the Numero Uno maritime state, handling 40% of national cargo traffic and nearly 70% of gas cargo. The state pioneered India's first port policy in 1995, paving the way for ten greenfield ports, including private and joint sector projects. Port Pipavav, operational in 1996, became a landmark under the BOOT policy, while the Gujarat Infrastructure Development Act of

1999 established a framework for public-private partnerships.

After upgradation of MMD, Kandla as an office of the Principal Officer, the office of the SIC, Jamnagar too comes under the jurisdiction of MMD, Kandla. It is an Examination centre for Nautical Grade and BSID facilitation centre to cater the facilities under the region. These MMDs mainly regulate matters pertaining to

ships, sailing vessels, casualty investigations, port security and safety, Maritime training Institutes etc.

Alang, established in 1983, has grown into one of the world's premier ship recycling hub, contributing 32.3 per cent of global recycling. Its sustainable practices recycle 99.95 per cent of materials, with 114 yards now compliant with the Hong Kong Convention. Expansion plans are underway to double capacity. Adding to this ecosystem, Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) is emerging as a global maritime cluster. Under the International Financial Services Centres Authority, it offers one-stop solutions for maritime services, fostering research, innovation and international collaboration. From ancient heritage to cutting-edge financial hubs, Gujarat remains of India's maritime journey.

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MARITIME SECURITY

Safeguarding Seafarers, Securing Seas: How India Responds to Maritime Threats

Capt. Anish Joseph
 Deputy Nautical Advisor-cum-Senior Deputy Director General (Tech), DGS

In the vast, shadowed silence of international waters, far beyond the coastlines that define nations, Indian seafarers face not only storms of weather but also the turbulence of piracy, geopolitical conflict, and unpredictable aggression. In this high-stakes maritime environment, the safety of Indian seafarers is both a national resolve and a global responsibility.

What most people never see is what happens behind the curtains, the coordination, the crisis response, and the diplomacy required to bring our seafarers back home safely. The Maritime Security Branch leads India's efforts from the Directorate General of Shipping, coordinating inter-ministerial actions and international engagement to ensure that no Indian life is left unprotected at sea. At the heart of this security architecture lies a coordinated surveillance and response network: the Directorate's Mercantile Marine Domain Awareness Centre - DGComm Centre work in close synergy with the Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre - Indian Ocean Region and the Indian Coast Guard's Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre. This triad forms India's maritime nerve centre, receiving intelligence, monitoring vessels, coordinating efforts and triggering real-time responses to secure and protect Indian lives.

In his message in the Directorate's Maritime Security Review 2024, published in July 2025, Shyam Jagannathan, Director General of Shipping, captured the spirit of



India's maritime security efforts with clarity and conviction: "Security at sea is not built on ships alone, but on systems, coordination, and conviction." Capt. S I Abul Kalam Azad, Nautical Advisor to the Government of India, reinforced this perspective by emphasising that "Maritime Security is not solely about protecting vessels, but fundamentally about upholding sovereignty, ensuring resilience, and securing survival at sea".

These observations are not abstract principles but are demonstrated in the Directorate's real-world response to crises. When piracy incidents erupt in regions such as the Gulf of Guinea or off the Somali coast, these guiding principles are reflected in the Directorate's decisive action. The operational and diplomatic challenges in such situations are immense. Shipowners may lack kidnap and ransom insurance or formal crisis management plans, resulting in unstructured and vulnerable negotiations. In such circumstances, the Directorate, in coordination with India's diplomatic

“INDIA'S MESSAGE IS CLEAR. WHEREVER THE INDIAN SEAFARER SAILS, THE NATION SAILS WITH THEM”

missions, inter-ministerial agencies, and international partners, mobilises every available resource. Diplomatic channels, naval coordination, and operational support are activated in a tightly orchestrated response. These operations are never textbook rescues. They demand real-time decision making, often a race against both time and bureaucracy, where each step can determine the safety of Indian crew members. Through such coordinated efforts, numerous Indian seafarers have been rescued and repatriated from some of the world's most hostile maritime environments. Each successful rescue is a living testament to the systems,

coordination, and conviction that underpin India's maritime security commitment.

Whether it is a hijacking alert in the Gulf of Aden, a fire following a drone strike in the Red Sea, or a critical rescue operation, the machinery moves swiftly, linking navies, coast guards, countries, non-governmental organisations, and stakeholders to protect those onboard. In 2024, India responded to several alarming maritime incidents amid escalating geopolitical tensions affecting shipping worldwide. Indian seafarers were safeguarded through prompt action, and India's mechanisms were praised internationally for assisting foreign nationals on foreign flagged ships. The hijacking of MV Ruen with no Indian crew was resolved after a 40-hour operation by Indian Marine Commandos, while the inferno on MT Marlin Luanda was extinguished by her Indian crew with naval support. Their exceptional courage earned Master & Crew of MT Marlin Luanda a prestigious IMO Bravery Award and the Indian Navy the IMO citation, bringing honour to the Indian maritime fraternity. These were not just crises but tests of courage, response, and responsibility.

India's strategy is not reactive but deeply institutionalised. Standard Operating Procedures are mandated for Indian flagged vessels and Indian seafarers in high-risk zones. Directorate's has also issued executive orders from time to time which has further enhanced onboard reporting, overall vigilance and mandatory crew training, therefore reinforcing maritime security through preparedness and resilience.

India's message is clear. Wherever the Indian seafarer sails, the nation sails with them.

MMD KOLKATA

The Backbone of Maritime Regulation in Eastern India

Vikrant Rai
 Principal Officer, MMD Kolkata, DGS

The Mercantile Marine Department (MMD), Kolkata, has stood as one of the oldest maritime institutions in the country, safeguarding shipping and seafarer welfare since its establishment in 1929. Headed by the Principal Officer, the department was created to enforce the Merchant Shipping Acts and Rules, covering safety of ships and life at sea, registration of vessels, tonnage measurement, crew accommodation, and the oversight of safety construction and communication systems.

From its earliest years, MMD Kolkata has played a pivotal role in ensuring compliance with international conventions through surveys of passenger ships, inspection of statutory equipment, approval of life-saving appliances and fire-fighting systems, and monitoring of radio telegraphy and the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System. Its mandate has steadily expanded to include Port State Control inspections, pollution prevention measures, casualty investigations, and the examination and certification of seafarers.

The roots of mercantile marine administration in India can be traced to a series of debates in the 1920s. Records show that in September 1924, correspondence between the Government of India and the Bengal Marine Department examined whether ports and shipping should remain a central subject or be provincialised. Recognising the national and international significance of shipping, navigation, lighthouses, port quarantine and major ports, the Government of India decided these must remain under central authority.

This principle was reinforced in November 1927, when Sir Geoffrey Corbett, Secretary to the Government of India, Department of Commerce, addressed provincial governments on the structure of mercantile marine



administration. A national conference brought together local governments, Port Trust chairmen, port officers and health officers to deliberate on whether merchant shipping matters should be managed locally or directly by the Governor-General in Council. The outcome was the establishment of Principal Officers of the MMDs, reporting directly to the central government, ensuring uniformity and independence in maritime governance.

At the time, India's coastline was divided into six districts centred on Aden, Karachi, Bombay, Madras, Calcutta and Rangoon. Each was placed under a Principal Officer as the chief executive authority for mercantile marine administration. The adoption of the "Principal Officer" designation echoed practices in the United Kingdom, giving clarity to shipowners and seafarers about the officer's regulatory role, distinct from port conservancy functions under the Port Trusts.

In this framework, MMD Kolkata became the focal point for maritime oversight in eastern India. For nearly a century, it has anchored India's compliance with safety norms, enabled seafarer certification, and supported the growth of shipping in the region. As India's maritime traffic and global role expand, MMD Kolkata continues to embody the principles of safety, accountability and service that guided its creation in 1929.

MMD MUMBAI

Guardian of India's Western Seaboard and Maritime Future

Capt. Abul Kalam Azad
 Principal Officer, MMD Mumbai, DGS

Along the western shores of India, where history, trade and tradition converge, the Mercantile Marine Department (MMD), Mumbai, has stood as one of the steadfast guardian of maritime safety and regulation for 95 years. Established in 1929 under the then Department of Commerce and the Merchant Shipping Act, 1923, MMD Mumbai remains the most pivotal field office of the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS), serving as the regulatory backbone of India's shipping sector.

Initially created alongside MMDs in Karachi, Madras, Calcutta and Rangoon, the Mumbai office gained prominence after 1949, when the DGS was constituted and brought under the Government of India's central authority. Today, MMD Mumbai's jurisdiction extends across Maharashtra and Goa, enforcing safety, security, environmental standards and crew welfare across one of the country's busiest maritime corridors.

At its core, MMD Mumbai is led by its Principal Officer, a position first held by Capt. E V Wish in 1930. The



office has since been headed by some of the finest officers in India's mercantile marine, including B K Gupta, the first Indian appointed in 1951. Supported by a team of deputy advisors, surveyors and administrative staff, the office delivers wide-ranging regulatory functions.

Foremost among these is ship registration. The first vessel registered by MMD Mumbai was the Dayavati in October 1929. Since then, the office has led India's ship registry, recording more vessels under the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958, and the Coasting Vessels Act, 1838 than all other MMDs combined. It played a central role in the "golden age" of Indian shipping between 1960 and 1975, when the national fleet grew from 1 million GT to 5 million GT.

Its responsibilities go far beyond registration. MMD Mumbai conducts vessel surveys and certification, audits

ships for ISPS, ISM and MLC compliance, issues petroleum licences, inspects fishing vessels, and oversees both Flag State and Port State Control inspections. It also examines and certifies seafarers, approves and audits maritime training institutes, and inspects ports and terminals within its jurisdiction. The department further contributes to contingency response, casualty investigations, and provides inputs to DGS on policy formulation.

MMD Mumbai's stakeholders range from global shipping lines and shipowners to port operators, RPSTL holders, shipyards, bunker suppliers, training institutes and service providers. The department has built a reputation for outreach and grievance redressal, maintaining trust with both domestic and international maritime communities.

For 95 years, MMD Mumbai has been more than an office of regulation; it has been an enabler of India's maritime growth. As shipping evolves with technology, sustainability and globalisation, MMD Mumbai remains committed to guiding Indian shipping with the same vigilance, expertise and dedication that has defined its legacy since 1929.

STCW

India's STCW Journey: Advancing Maritime Training and Certification

Capt. Ravi Singh Sikarwar
 Nautical Surveyor-cum-Deputy Director General (Tech.), DGS

The International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), adopted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in 1978, marked a turning point in maritime regulation. Before its adoption, training and certification standards varied widely, creating inconsistencies in a global industry. The STCW Convention introduced harmonised standards for training, certification, and watchkeeping worldwide.

India ratified the Convention in 1984. As a littoral State and signatory, India, through the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS), became responsible for



“INDIA FOLLOWS A HARMONISED STANDARD FOR TRAINING, CERTIFICATION, AND WATCH KEEPING OF ITS SEAFARERS.”

ensuring compliance. A major milestone was India's inclusion in the IMO "White List," recognising its training and certification systems as fully compliant.

Over the years, the Directorate has developed a comprehensive framework for examinations, approvals, audits, and assessments. Even during COVID-19, continuity was ensured through online orals, virtual audits, and hybrid modular courses. Modernisation has since accelerated, with digital Certificates of Competency (CoCs), online applications, and biometric INDoS registration reinforcing efficiency, transparency, and security.

To strengthen training quality, syllabi across Near Coastal Voyage (NCV) and Foreign Going (FG) categories have been revised. Recognising of traditional assessment, the DGS is introducing web-based simulation tools such as ECDis to support scenario-based evaluations. Structured transition schemes under DGS Order No. 17 of 2022 also facilitate the entry of serving and retired Indian Navy personnel into the Merchant Navy.

Internationally, India is collaborating with various partner countries to provide training in STCW-compliant polar operations. In parallel, work has begun on a unified order on safe manning of Indian ships, aligning with IMO Resolution A.1047(27) and the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958.

India's STCW journey is not just about certificates, but about building careers, ensuring safety, and reinforcing global trust.

TRANSITION FROM DGS TO DGMA

Merchant Shipping Act, 2025: A Progressive Shift in India's Maritime Framework

Ash Mohomad
 Deputy Director General of Shipping, DGS

Over the decades, the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 had become a bulky piece of legislation due to various amendments carried out in the Act from time to time. Owing to frequent amendments between 1966 and 2014, the number of provisions expanded to more than 560 sections, rendering the legislation cumbersome and fragmented.

The New Merchant Shipping Act, 2025 (24 of 2025) has been recently passed by both Houses of Parliament during the Monsoon session in August 2025 and has received the assent of the President of India on 18.08.2025. The said Act has been duly published

in the Official Gazette of India. Upon coming into force, the Merchant Shipping Act, 2025 shall repeal and replace the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958.

The Merchant Shipping Act, 2025 has streamlined the legislative framework by consolidating and rationalising its provisions into a compact structure of 325 sections across 16 Parts, effectively removing redundancies and overlaps. The legislation has evolved through extensive consultations into a comprehensive statute aimed at modernising India's maritime framework, aligning domestic laws with international best practices and International Maritime Organization (IMO) conventions.

Key reforms include the



Sarbananda Sonowal, Union Minister, Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW), presented the Merchant Shipping Bill in the parliament which has been passed and the gazette notification issued as MS Act 2025

renaming of the Director General of Shipping as the Director General of Maritime Administration (DGMA) and placing strong

emphasis on seafarer welfare, growth of tonnage under the Indian flag, and ship safety and security. The Act also addresses the

protection of the marine environment and preparedness for marine emergencies.

Significant measures to promote tonnage under the

Indian flag include expanded ownership criteria for vessel registration, registration of non-mechanically propelled vessels, and registration without requiring a call at an Indian port. Provisions on maritime education and seafarer welfare have been updated based on IMO/ILO Conventions, and chapters for Survey, Audit, and Certification have been included.

The DGMA is empowered to issue directions to ports and the Director General of Lighthouses and Lightships to ensure compliance with international conventions. The Act also promotes transparency in charges levied to service providers and decriminalises minor offences to boost investor confidence, while serious matters remain under

court jurisdiction.

The Merchant Shipping Act, 2025 is a decisive step towards positioning India as a trusted global maritime hub. It represents a transformative shift from a regulation-heavy framework to a facilitative policy environment that boosts investor confidence, raises safety standards, safeguards the marine ecosystem, and strengthens India's position as a maritime power.

This Act incorporates global best practices, reduces compliance burdens, and ensures comprehensive adoption of India's international commitments, all of which will catalyse growth and sustainability in the sector. It addresses the critical objectives of increasing tonnage under the Indian

flag, reducing compliance burdens, and strengthening coastal security. By doing so, the Act empowers Indian ports and shipping to shoulder a larger share of global trade—driving economic growth, generating employment, and contributing directly to the national vision of Viksit Bharat. The New Merchant Shipping Act, 2025 will shift the focus from mere regulation to facilitation, thereby advancing India's credibility and bankability as a maritime jurisdiction. This progressive approach is intended to attract greater global investment, stimulate employment generation, and foster a resilient environment for the sustainable and inclusive growth of the maritime sector.

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