

Opening and Welcome

Distinguished colleagues, esteemed members of the Indian Maritime Centre and Indian Private Ports and Terminals Association, respected representatives from the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, industry leaders from shipowners, port operators, builders, and maritime strategists, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my distinct privilege to address you today at this vital workshop dedicated to advancing policy interventions that support the redressal of current challenges within India's maritime sector. Gatherings such as these, which bring together the nation's foremost decision-makers and experts, are cornerstone events for charting the future of Indian maritime policy and sectoral progress.

Relevance of Policy Interventions: Setting the Context

The Indian maritime ecosystem stands on the threshold of transformation. The enactment of the Merchant Shipping Act, 2025 and the Coastal Shipping Act, 2025 has set in motion a new era of regulatory clarity, operational efficiency, and international alignment. The maritime sector's scope—spanning the blue economy, seafarer welfare, port modernization, and technological adaptation—demands regulatory frameworks that are dynamic and participatory.

- The new legislation is designed to reduce compliance burdens and promote growth in Indian shipping tonnage.
- Rules under the 2025 Act will strengthen the rights and protections of seafarers while enhancing safety, security, and environmental safeguards across Indian waters.
- A transparent, consultative approach involving dedicated technical committees ensures that rulemaking is inclusive and sensitive to the sector's real-world challenges.

Key Policy Reforms and Sectoral Impacts

The Merchant Shipping Act, 2025 is a modernized and streamlined legal framework replacing the outdated 1958 Act. It aligns India's maritime laws with key international conventions like SOLAS, MARPOL, STCW, and MLC, enhancing safety, environmental protection, and seafarer welfare. The Act mandates registration of all Indian vessels strengthens maritime administration by establishing a National Shipping Board and appointing a Director-General, and ensures transparent vessel registration processes.

It improves seafarer rights with compulsory training, medical fitness, employment agreements, timely wage payments, and social security. Safety measures include mandatory vessel certification, incident reporting, and assistance at sea.

Environmental compliance and liability provisions are robust, incorporating pollution control, wreck removal, fault-based liability, and compulsory insurance. The Act also regulates fishing and small vessels, mandates data reporting, and empowers authorities to enforce regulations.

A significant feature of the new Act is its expanded focus to increase Indian tonnage by broadening the scope of mandatory ship registration. Unlike the 1958 Act, the 2025 Act requires registration of all seagoing vessels regardless of tonnage or propulsion, including those below 15 net tons navigating Indian coasts. This unified framework ensures legal clarity, boosts national shipping tonnage, a key marker of economic strength and maritime security, and enhances compliance and safety across all vessels under the Indian flag.

The Coastal Shipping Act rules, focusing on licensing of foreign vessels and data strategy, are also progressing robustly.

Policy Interventions on SBFA

A flagship scheme fueling India's shipbuilding sector is the Ship Building Finance Assistance (SBFA) initiative. Since 2016, SBFA has disbursed nearly ₹529 crore, aiding 186 vessels and strongly supporting domestic shipyards. The recently launched digital SBFA portal enhances transparency and fund tracking, aligning with Maritime India Vision 2030 and Amrit Kaal Vision 2047. Continued efforts focus on resolving operational delays and integrating financial systems to accelerate India's shipbuilding capabilities.

Partnership, Participation, and Outlook

Our sector can only advance through a partnership between government and industry. The way we draft and implement subordinate legislation must remain open, evidence-based, and adaptive to new global realities. I urge all assembled stakeholders to engage deeply in ongoing consultations and to continue providing critical feedback, so that the evolving policy regime genuinely reflects the needs and ambitions of India's maritime community.

The Indian Maritime Centre, with support from IPPTA and the Ministry, will play a pivotal role in nurturing such dialogue and turning shared vision into actionable policy frameworks.

Closing

Let us resolve to work together across government, industry, and academia, to cement India's place as a leader in maritime excellence. Our shared future depends on integrity, openness, and relentless commitment to reform. I thank the Indian Maritime Centre and all partners for organizing this timely and meaningful workshop

and reaffirm the Directorate General of Shipping's commitment to transparent, effective, and forward-looking maritime governance.

Thank you. Jai Hind.