

**10<sup>th</sup> Grand Gala Edition of the India Maritime Awards,**  
**organised by**  
**Daily Shipping Times**

**Hon'ble dignitaries, distinguished leaders of the maritime fraternity, esteemed award recipients, industry partners, ladies and gentlemen,**

Good evening everyone. I am Shri Sushil Khopde, Additional Director General, Directorate General of Maritime Administration

It is a great privilege and honour to be present at the **10th Grand Gala Edition of the India Maritime Awards**, organised by **Daily Shipping Times**. I extend my sincere appreciation to the organisers for bringing together the diverse stakeholders of India's maritime ecosystem to celebrate excellence, innovation, and leadership in this vital sector. As we gather to discuss the theme, **"Navigating the Next Decade: Transforming Indian Shipping for a Sustainable Future,"** we stand at a defining moment in our maritime journey. The coming decade presents unprecedented opportunities for India to strengthen its position as a leading maritime nation through sustainable growth, digital transformation, green shipping initiatives, resilient infrastructure, and a future-ready workforce aligned with MIV 2030 and MAKV 2047. Our collective vision and commitment today will determine how effectively Indian shipping navigates the evolving global landscape and contributes to the nation's aspiration of becoming a developed economy by 2047.

India today stands at a defining moment in its economic journey. With a GDP of over USD 4.19 trillion and a sustained growth trajectory, our nation is steadily progressing towards becoming a USD 5 trillion economy and, soon thereafter, one of the world's leading economic powers. The maritime sector remains a key driver of this growth, facilitating nearly 95% of India's trade by volume and 70% by value. This clearly demonstrates that India's economic aspirations are deeply connected with the strength and efficiency of its maritime ecosystem.

The Directorate General of Maritime Administration, as India's statutory maritime authority, is tasked with implementing shipping policy and legislation to ensure the safety of life and ships at sea, prevent marine pollution, regulate seafarer employment and welfare, promote maritime education and training, and uphold India's obligations under international conventions of the International Maritime Organization. Operating under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, the DGMA serves as the country's principal regulator for merchant shipping—overseeing ship registration, surveys, certification, tonnage augmentation, coastal shipping development, and the

examination and credentialing of merchant navy officers, while supervising all allied offices 3 within its jurisdiction.

Supporting this mandate on the ground are the Mercantile Marine Departments (MMDs), which function directly under the DGMA as its regional safety and technical enforcement arms, responsible for implementing the Merchant Shipping Act through ship surveys, statutory certifications, port state and flag state inspections, and registration of sea-going vessels ensuring that India's ships, seafarers, and maritime institutions meet the highest national and international standards.

With 13 major ports (12 envisaged and Vadhavan Port in the making), 200+ non-major ports, and an extensive coastline of 11,098 km, India possesses one of the largest maritime infrastructures in the world, giving it a natural advantage in connecting markets and enabling prosperity.

India's fleet strength has also grown steadily, with 1,520+ merchant vessels aggregating over 13 million GT capacity. On the global stage, India now ranks 18th in flag registration and 19th in carrying capacity, underscoring its expanding role in global shipping while contributing significantly to supply chain resilience.

The Government has positioned the Blue Economy as a pillar of Viksit Bharat 2047, with a strong emphasis on port-led development, multimodal logistics, and ease of doing business reforms. Initiatives under Sagarmala, Harit Sagar, and Maritime India Vision 2030 have transformed ports into hubs of efficiency, green practices, and integrated logistics.

As we have seen the recent geopolitical tensions, The Strait of Hormuz disruption is the latest reminder that geopolitics remains one of the biggest risks to India's economic stability, and that resilience, not cost efficiency alone, must now define how India builds its logistics and trade strategy.

To facilitate the successful and secured trade, **The question is no longer just what is the cheapest route, but which route remains reliable during disruption.**

While the recent US-Iran understanding has allowed shipping activity through the Strait of Hormuz, which may gradually normalize over the next few months, the reopening of the trade route does not eliminate the risks associated with it. Businesses and policy makers will have to adapt to the new normal of higher freight costs and possible intermittent disruptions in the future. What is important is to understand that disruption in the Strait of Hormuz is not an isolated event. It follows a series of shocks that have reshaped the global economic landscape over the past few years. Each episode has reinforced a simple but important lesson: efficiency alone is no longer sufficient. Resilience matters. This has fundamentally shifted how governments and businesses view trade. It is no longer assessed solely through the lens of cost and productivity, but

increasingly through the lens of continuity amid disruption. Resilience, however, often comes at a cost. Diversified sourcing, inventory buffers and alternative transport routes may not always be the cheapest options, but they can prove invaluable when disruptions emerge unexpectedly. Building resilience, therefore, requires more than strategic intent. It requires robust physical and digital infrastructure that allows economies and businesses to adapt when disruptions occur. This is where logistics assumes a much larger role. Logistics is no longer simply about moving goods. It is about ensuring continuity in accessing critical inputs, maintaining production networks, and keeping markets connected during periods of uncertainty.

To ease the logistics cost, streamlined trade facilitation and to enhance ease of doing business, our flagship project **eSamudra**, a comprehensive web-based digital platform designed to streamline and unify maritime operations. e Samudra will host over 15 modules and 72 sub processes covering ship registration, certification, port services, maritime safety, and more, enabling digitized certificates, smart notifications, efficient tracking, and integrated data management. Scheduled for launch in August 2026, it will serve as a single interface for statutory functions, ensuring transparency, speed, and ease of doing business.

Aligned with India's broader vision of technological advancement and sustainability, e Samudra incorporates cutting-edge tools like geospatial platforms, maritime security systems, and data analytics—facilitating deep decision support and predictive insights. The initiative aims to modernize maritime governance, enhance safety standards in line with IMO regulations like SOLAS and MARPOL, and promote green shipping practices such as LNG adoption and renewable energy use at ports.

**At the heart of global trade are our seafarers, who, through their unwavering dedication, resilience, and perseverance, ensure the uninterrupted movement of goods across oceans. Often working in challenging environments and away from their families for extended periods, they remain the vital link connecting nations, sustaining supply chains, and driving the growth of the global economy. Their commitment keeps the world connected, making seafarers the true backbone of international trade and maritime commerce.** India today has over 7.5 lakh registered seafarers, of whom more than 3.2 lakh are actively deployed across the globe, serving on vessels operating across diverse geographies, often far from home, and sometimes in difficult and uncertain environments. These women and men are the silent engines of global trade, and it is our foremost responsibility as the Directorate General of Shipping to stand by them. Grievances received through our legacy system rose from 856 cases in 2023, to 1,116 cases in 2024, and to 3,170 cases in 2025. This is not a sign of distress. It is a sign of growing trust. Seafarers are reaching out because they believe the Directorate will respond, and we have maintained a resolution rate consistently above 98 percent. With the launch of the **e-Navik Portal 24x7 Grievance Redressal Mechanism** today, we

deepen that commitment. Seafarers can now reach us round the clock through a domestic toll-free helpline at 1800-889-7768, an international toll-free number at +1-888-988-0256, WhatsApp at +91 8655856830, a dedicated email at enavik.24x7@gov.in, and the e-Navik grievance portal. Every grievance lodged through any of these channels receives a unique ticket ID, ensuring complete traceability, automated acknowledgement, real-time status tracking, and end-to-end auditability throughout the grievance lifecycle. This mechanism is one of its kind in the world, dedicated exclusively to seafarers, and it is particularly critical for the approximately 18,000 Indian seafarers operating in and around the Gulf region, ensuring that in any hour of need, no seafarer is alone.

Initiatives such as “Sagar Mein Yog” and “Sagar Mein Samman” reflect a structured approach towards the welfare and recognition of seafarers. While “Sagar Mein Yog” promotes physical and mental well-being, “Sagar Mein Samman” acknowledges the contribution of seafarers to the nation’s economy and global trade. The maritime training and certification ecosystem has faced systemic gaps affecting transparency and efficiency. The absence of a unified platform for pre-sea training seats has enabled unauthorized institutions and unmonitored admissions, while attendance tracking remains manual and decentralized. There is also no structured linkage between MTI graduates and onboard training berths, creating uncertainty in sea training placements. Further, the largely non-digitized Training Assessment Record (TAR) and manual certification processes have led to delays and lack of standardization.

DG Shipping’s digital initiatives are addressing these challenges by creating a transparent, secure, and end-to-end maritime ecosystem covering training, attendance, examinations, certification, and compliance. These platforms improve standardization, credibility, and overall quality of maritime education in India, while ensuring alignment with international conventions. Transparency and accountability remain foundational to our functioning.

DG Shipping follows a zero-tolerance approach to fraud, malpractice, and unethical practices across maritime education, certification, and crewing. Digital grievance redressal mechanisms and regulatory oversight ensure timely resolution of issues and protection of seafarers’ rights.

This institutional commitment is being actively promoted and reinforced through targeted national communication initiatives such as Saathi Hamesha-24x7 Grievance Redressal, Zero Samjhauta – Zero Tolerance in Crewing, Zero Tolerance in Training, and the Join Merchant Navy campaigns along with on ground initiatives such as Engagement of professional Event Management Firm 3 BEES Research Foundation to organize a series of exposure trips to educational institutions nationwide so far we have reached 9,798 students (4,532 female and 5,266 male) across 31 institutions spanning Tier-1 to Tier-6 cities

Seafarer well-being is central to sustainable growth. Initiatives promoting physical fitness, mental resilience, and overall wellness contribute directly to safer maritime operations. Safety remains our highest priority, and through “Suraksha Sarvapratham,” we are reinforcing a safety-first culture across the sector, supported by structured reporting, analysis, and technology-enabled learning systems.

We are also progressing towards the development of the Indian Global Maritime Safety Platform, a unified digital system integrating safety data, training resources, regulatory guidance, and incident reporting. This will support proactive risk management and the objective of achieving “Zero Incidents” in line with global best practices. The maritime sector ultimately depends on the human element the competence, judgement, and resilience of seafarers operating in complex global environments. While systems and technology continue to evolve, the protection of seafarer rights and welfare remains central to maritime safety and sustainability.

The transition from the Directorate General of Shipping to the Directorate General of Maritime Administration marks an important step towards more integrated and future-ready maritime governance. Alongside this institutional transition, recent legislative reforms, including the Merchant Shipping Act, 2025, the Coastal Shipping Act, 2025 and the Indian Ports Act, 2025, provide the foundation for a modern, efficient and responsive regulatory framework. Together, these institutional reforms, national visions and sectoral initiatives represent a decisive step towards building a green, resilient and globally competitive maritime ecosystem.

On sustainability front, Recognising that maritime decarbonization requires coordinated action across the entire maritime value chain, the Directorate General of Maritime Administration is advancing Maritime INDIA @ Net Zero through the National Maritime Decarbonization Policy Framework, which is being developed as an integrated national pathway for the sector. The Framework provides a coordinated implementation roadmap through eight interconnected pillars, namely Pillar 1: Green Shipbuilding and Retrofits, Pillar 2: Green Ports, Pillar 3: Green Ship Recycling, Pillar 4: Green Finance, Pillar 5: Green Skill Development, Pillar 6: Alternate Fuels, Pillar 7: Green Technology and Pillar 8: Pollution Prevention. These pillars seek to align Government, ports, industry, academia, financial institutions and the maritime workforce towards a common objective of building a safe, sustainable and future-ready maritime ecosystem.

Thank You,

Jai Hind!