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Sailor Today

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From Editor's desk

Policy, Crisis, and Community

January 2026 was packed with news that matters to seafarers. Policy changes took effect from the 1st, most notably the ILO global minimum wage increase for able seafarers to US\$690/month, with further rises to US\$704 (2027) and US\$715 (2028). The STCW Code amendments on personal safety and social responsibilities became mandatory, including training to prevent harassment, bullying, and assault, reinforcing safer workplaces on board.

Reports highlighted ongoing pressures at sea. The ITF's abandonment figures for 2025 hit a new high: 6,223 seafarers across 410 ships stranded, with Indian crews among the worst affected. The WMU survey painted a stark picture: long hours, mental stress, limited shore leave, and nearly half planning to leave the industry within five years. On a brighter note, MILAAP – ITF Seafarers' Expo 2026 ran in Mumbai from Jan 29–31. Over 5,000 seafarers and families attended workshops on rights, career opportunities, and safety, alongside cultural events and government announcements on new support measures. The Seapost January newsletter highlighted wellbeing campaigns and new partnerships for health, legal aid, and maritime safety.

Incidents reminded the community of the sea's risks. The MV Devon Bay capsized in the South China Sea, claiming two lives and leaving four missing. A separate missing seafarer case off Germany ended safely after extensive searches.

Administrative updates included the US NMC's new portal for mariner credentials, union training sessions, port meetings, and new contracts for Great Lakes crews.

From wage hikes and training reforms to expos, crises, and welfare initiatives, January 2026 underlined the highs and challenges of life at sea. Seafarers remain at the heart of the global maritime engine, navigating change, risk, and opportunity every day.

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“SEA CONNECTS US ALL”

The Nautical Institute has released a new short film, *The Sea Connects Us All*, highlighting how shared purpose and challenges continue to unite maritime professionals across oceans, sectors and generations

The video reflects the industry’s rapid transformation, including shifts in trading patterns, regulatory demands, digitalisation and the transition to new fuels. As an educational charity and global membership organisation with consultative status at the IMO, The Nautical Institute supports seafarers through practical guidance, interactive short courses, certification schemes such as dynamic positioning, and global professional networks spanning more than 50 countries.



Captain John Lloyd, Chief Executive, said the film underscores the Institute’s commitment to equipping maritime professionals with the knowledge, confidence and standards required to navigate today’s complex operational and regulatory environment.



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Navigating The Mind @ Sea

Part Six

By Capt Nangia

The Heart at Work on the Bridge

As Capt. Amresh spoke, the theory no longer felt abstract. Each idea seemed to anchor itself effortlessly in situations every seafarer recognises, moments when the sea tests not technical competence, but inner balance. On a ship, decisions are rarely made in ideal conditions. Fatigue, weather, traffic density, commercial pressure and human limitations all converge on the bridge. Capt. Amresh pointed out that in such moments, it is not the intellect alone that decides outcomes.

Consider a night watch in congested waters. Radar alarms sound intermittently, the ARPA picture is cluttered and a junior officer hesitates before calling the Master. Two officers may have identical training and experience, yet respond very differently. One reacts with irritation, impatience or panic. The other remains steady, communicates clearly and creates calm in the team. The difference, he suggested, lies not in intelligence, but in the state of the heart.

When the heart's energy is consumed entirely by outward pressures, the mind becomes reactive. But when a portion of that current flows inward, even unconsciously, awareness widens. The officer perceives the situation as a whole rather than as isolated threats. Decisions become measured rather than impulsive.



Emotional Currents Below Deck

Life at sea compresses human interaction into a confined space for months at a time. Small misunderstandings, if left unresolved, can escalate rapidly. Capt. Amresh recalled how seemingly trivial issues, tone of voice, cultural differences and perceived slights, often generate disproportionate emotional reactions onboard.

From the yogic perspective, these reactions arise not from the present incident but from accumulated impressions. A sharp remark from a colleague may lodge near the heart as irritation. Repeated over time, it hardens into resentment. Eventually, cooperation suffers and safety is compromised.

He likened these impressions to sediment settling in calm waters. Unless cleaned, they remain unseen yet affect depth and clarity. The practice of cleaning, done in the evening after duty hours, allows these impressions to dissolve. The next day, the officer returns to watch with lightness rather than emotional carryover.

Responsibility and the Weight of Command

Command, he observed, places a unique load on the heart. A Master may appear calm outwardly while carrying the weight of cargo value, crew welfare, schedule pressure and regulatory scrutiny internally. Without inner balance, this weight manifests as anxiety, rigidity or emotional withdrawal.

Capt. Amresh explained that guilt is among the heaviest impressions a seafarer carries, whether from a near miss, a harsh word spoken in fatigue or a decision that, in hindsight, could have been better. These impressions do not disappear with time. They remain stored in the subtle body, affecting confidence and clarity.

Cleaning allows these burdens to release without justification or self criticism. It restores emotional neutrality, enabling a Master or officer to lead with firmness yet compassion, an essential balance in maritime command.

Crisis and Expanded Awareness

In emergencies, the spectrum of consciousness becomes visible. During a machinery failure in heavy weather or a medical emergency mid ocean, some officers narrow their focus to a single problem, losing situational awareness. Others seem to access a wider field of perception, coordinating multiple actions calmly, communicating effectively and anticipating outcomes.

This, Capt. Amresh suggested, is not accidental. When the heart opens through meditation supported by Yogic Transmission, awareness expands naturally. The mind remains fully engaged with the situation while simultaneously anchored in inner calm. This is not detachment, but integration.

Such moments reflect what yogic science calls Sahaj Samadhi, a state where one functions fully in the world while remaining inwardly balanced. On a ship, this translates into safer decisions, clearer leadership and emotional stability under pressure.



Declutter the Mind

Heartfulness Cleaning technique

Evolution at Sea

The sea, he concluded, is an unparalleled teacher. It strips life down to essentials and repeatedly confronts individuals with uncertainty. For those willing to look inward, shipboard life becomes not just a profession, but a field for inner evolution.

Yoga, in this sense, is not practiced only in a quiet room on shore. It is practiced on the bridge at 0300 hours, in the engine room during breakdowns, in multicultural messrooms and in moments when responsibility feels overwhelming.

As our conversation paused, the coffee long finished, it was clear that mindfulness at sea is not about escaping reality. It is about meeting it fully, steady at the helm, both outwardly and within.



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Japan Leads Early Adoption of Advanced Fire Detection on RoRo Vessels

Japan is emerging as an early adopter of advanced fire detection systems on RoRo vessels, according to inspection data from global vessel condition specialist Idwal. As electric vehicles form a growing part of the cargo mix, fire safety on RoRo decks is facing increased scrutiny. Idwal's findings show that while adoption of advanced detection technology remains uneven globally, Japanese owned and operated vessels are increasingly installing sophisticated systems ahead of regulatory requirements. These systems are most commonly seen on newbuild vessels, including LNG fuelled car carriers equipped with camera based detection designed to identify abnormal heat signatures at an early stage. Much of the global RoRo fleet was built before electric vehicle fire risk became a key consideration, making retrofitting challenging. Across the industry, wider adoption is expected as regulatory clarity improves under measures such as MSC.555.



Indigenous ASW Craft ANJADIP Delivered to Indian Navy Under IRS Class

The Indian Navy has taken delivery of ANJADIP, the third of eight Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW SWC), marking a key milestone for indigenous naval shipbuilding and for Indian Register of Shipping (IRS). Delivered on 22 December 2025 at INS Adyar, Chennai, the vessel has been designed and built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) in accordance with IRS Naval Rules. Named after Anjediva Island off the coast of Karnataka, ANJADIP reflects India's focus on strengthening coastal defence. Measuring 77 metres in length, it is the largest Indian Naval warship powered by a diesel engine and waterjet propulsion system, offering high manoeuvrability in shallow waters. The IRS-classed ASW SWC programme is expected to significantly enhance the Navy's shallow-water anti-submarine warfare capability and overall maritime preparedness.



Sailor Today International Maritime Radio is the world's first dedicated international maritime radio station, operated by Sailor Today, an Indian maritime media group that's been connecting seafarers since 1991. It combines a shipping magazine, TV content, awards, and this unique radio platform tailored for seafarers, shore personnel, and maritime professionals.

IRS Certifies India's First Indigenous Autonomous Navigation Software for USVs



Indian Register of Shipping (IRS) has successfully certified India's first indigenously developed autonomous navigation and control software for Unmanned Surface Vessels (USVs), marking a major milestone in the country's maritime autonomy capabilities. The Advanced Autonomous Navigation and Control Software (A2NCS) has been jointly developed by the Indian Navy's Weapons and Electrical Engineering Systems Establishment (WESEE) and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL). Integrated into the Indian Navy's Fast Interceptor Boat platform, now designated as the autonomous FIB, the software enables remote and autonomous operations across a wide range of mission profiles. A2NCS enhances situational awareness by fusing inputs from multiple sensors to generate a real-time maritime picture, supporting safe navigation in complex and high-traffic environments. The system has been validated through extensive simulation and sea trials, demonstrating compliance with COLREG requirements, cyber resilience and fail-safe performance, reinforcing India's focus on indigenous and autonomous naval technologies.

Key highlights about Sailor Today Maritime Radio:

- It's an all-in-one app-based station featuring music, interviews, maritime news, talk shows, and industry updates.
- Available via the Sailor Today Maritime Radio app (on Google Play, App Store, and Indus Appstore).

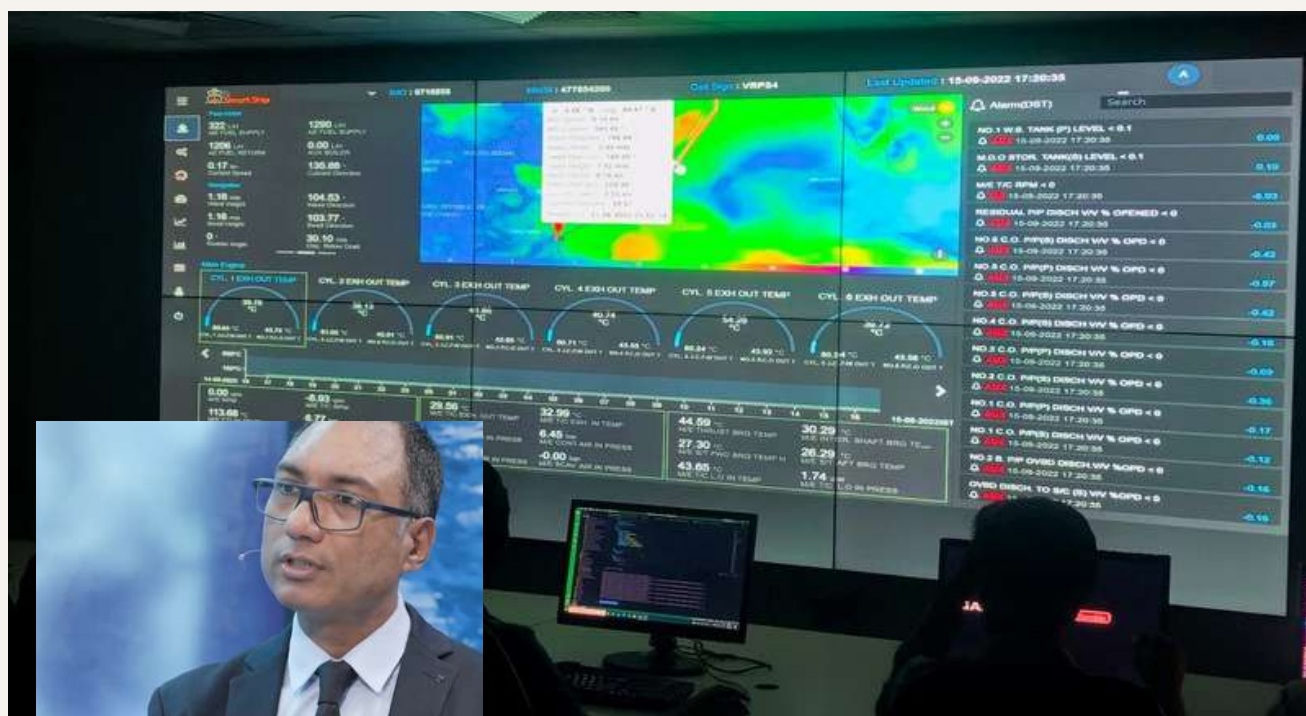
Digital Innovation Key to Safeguarding Galley Quality Amid Supply Chain Challenges in 2026, Says MCTC



Digital innovation and a willingness to adapt will be critical to overcoming ongoing supply chain challenges in 2026 and ensuring quality is maintained in shipboard galley operations, according to leading catering management company MCTC. The maritime industry continues to face uncertainty driven by geopolitics, security concerns, rising costs and supply chain disruption. MCTC says digital tools, strong supplier partnerships and continuous crew upskilling will play a central role in supporting vessels worldwide. Its data-driven platforms provide shipowners with real-time visibility of consumption patterns, waste metrics and cost trends, helping maintain consistent provisioning even in volatile markets. With longer voyages, evolving crew dietary needs and intermittent product shortages still impacting operations, MCTC believes coordinated planning, diversified sourcing and next-generation digital training will be essential to supporting crew welfare and operational resilience.

Digital Transformation Becomes Profitable for Maritime in 2026

The maritime industry is entering a decisive phase in 2026 where digital transformation will no longer be optional but clearly profitable, according to leading vessel performance platform Smart Ship Hub (SSH). The company expects a sharp acceleration in technology adoption across fleets and maritime value chains, driven by growing demand for measurable return on investment, real-time intelligence and enterprise-grade AI. Smart Ship Hub says owners and operators are increasingly seeking clear, data-backed value from digitalisation, including time savings, operational agility and improved decision-making. Advances in automation, AI, sensor technology and unified digital platforms are expected to improve fleet awareness, reduce manual processes and democratise access to high-quality data. Despite regulatory uncertainty, SSH believes 2026 presents a critical opportunity for companies to strengthen digital foundations, modernise workflows and adopt future-ready, fuel-agnostic systems that support performance, compliance and long-term resilience.



Mental health professionals working across OneCare Group, including its specialist division Mental Health Support Solutions, warn that the hours between 6 pm and 10 pm are among the most emotionally vulnerable periods for seafarers.

Research highlighted by the American Psychological Association shows that feelings of loneliness often increase

Most Vulnerable Hours Are Between 6pm and 10pm

during the early evening. For crews at sea, cut off from family life and celebrations ashore, these hours can be particularly difficult. Clinicians within [OneCare Group](#) report that this evening period is often when emotional fatigue surfaces. The end of the working day, reduced daylight at this time of year, and the unavoidable distance from home all contribute to a rise in feelings of isolation.

Although crews follow round the clock watch systems, the early evening is one of the few times when watchkeepers and day workers often overlap, which is why emotional strain can become more noticeable during these hours. Social media can intensify these emotions further, with reminders of gatherings and routines that seafarers are unable to take part in.



[Charles Watkins](#), Director of Clinical Operations at [Mental Health Support Solutions](#) and a Clinical Psychologist, said: "Once the day slows down and distractions disappear, people have more time to think about what they are missing. At sea this effect becomes even more pronounced. Holiday seasons can bring strong emotional triggers and seafarers may often feel the contrast between their lives on board and what their families are experiencing at home. It is important that they know support is available the moment they need it."



"In Conversation With" is the flagship talk show on Sailor Today Maritime Radio, the world's first dedicated international maritime radio station. Launched in early 2024 (with the inaugural broadcast around April 5, 2024), it's an exclusive interview-based program featuring in-depth conversations with prominent figures from the maritime industry, including captains, chief engineers, maritime leaders, trainers, and innovators.

Marinos Kokkinis, CEO of OneCare Group, added that senior officers often shoulder an additional emotional load as they support crew members who are struggling. He said: "Evening hours can be challenging for anyone who is away from home but for seafarers the sense of distance is far more intense. Companies should recognise that wellbeing is not solely a daytime issue. Support needs to be available around the clock, particularly during periods when emotions run high. It is essential that seafarers feel able to reach out without hesitation."



Most Vulnerable Hours Are Between 6pm and 10pm

OneCare Group is encouraging shipowners and managers to take a more focused approach to supporting crews during the early evening. This includes ensuring that access to confidential mental health professionals is clearly communicated on board, reinforcing awareness among officers and making certain that seafarers know who they can contact should they need immediate help.

Simple measures such as regular reminders, clear signposting of support services and encouraging open conversations can make a tangible difference during these difficult hours. With many seafarers spending long periods away from home at this time of year, a thoughtful approach to evening wellbeing is an important part of maintaining both welfare and safety on board.

Addressing the pressures that arise between 6pm and 10pm helps to ensure that crews feel supported during a season when emotional distance can be felt most strongly.



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Columbia Group has announced a strategic expansion into India with the opening of a new integrated maritime services office in Mumbai, reinforcing the Group's long-term global growth strategy.

Columbia Group Expands Global Footprint With New Integrated Maritime Hub in India

The new office will serve as a regional hub supporting a wide range of Columbia Group companies and services, including ship management, performance optimisation, digital solutions, travel services, training coordination and operational support.

Designed to complement the Group's established hub in the Philippines, the India office will strengthen regional coverage while addressing specific local market needs. Columbia Group plans to recruit around 220 professionals in India, enhancing global service capability and operational resilience.

The expansion reflects the Group's continued focus on proximity to clients and partners, integrated service delivery and people-led growth in one of the world's most important maritime markets.



Danica Crewing Services has expanded its global crewing footprint with the opening of a new recruitment office in Istanbul, strengthening access to highly skilled Turkish seafarers for shipowners and operators worldwide. Led by former seafarer Hasan Koroglu, the Istanbul office will manage recruitment in line with Danica's established screening and vetting standards applied across its global network.

Danica Crewing Expands Global Network With New Recruitment Office in Turkey

Turkey is a major maritime nation with a large and well-qualified seafarer base, supported by internationally recognised training and certification. As a full member of the International Maritime Organization and a STCW whitelisted state, Turkish licences are recognised by all major flag administrations, enabling seamless deployment across global fleets.

The Turkey office further strengthens Danica's owned crewing network spanning Europe, Asia and the Philippines, providing clients access to a global pool of more than 725,000 seafarers through a single point of contact.



A portrait of Capt Pradeep Singh, a man with a mustache, wearing a dark blazer over a dark polo shirt with a colorful stripe on the collar. He is standing outdoors with a blurred background of trees and a building. The bottom of the image features a dark, textured background with a cityscape silhouette.

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INDIAN COAST GUARD INDUCTS POLLUTION CONTROL VESSEL SAMUDRA PRATAP UNDER IRS CLASS



The Indian Coast Guard has inducted ICGS Samudra Pratap, the first of two indigenously designed and built Pollution Control Vessels, at a formal ceremony held on 5 January 2026 at Goa Shipyard Limited. Classed by the Indian Register of Shipping (IRS), the vessel marks a significant enhancement of India's maritime environmental protection and response capabilities.

Designed and constructed in accordance with IRS Classification Rules, Samudra Pratap is equipped with advanced pollution detection and response systems, including sweeping arms, floating booms, high-capacity skimmers and a dedicated pollution control laboratory, as well as external fire-fighting capability.

With more than 60 per cent indigenous content, the vessel strongly supports the Government of India's Atmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India initiatives and will play a critical role in marine pollution control, maritime safety, search and rescue operations and protection of India's Exclusive Economic Zone.

Samudra Pratap is the first Pollution Control Vessel in the ICG fleet to feature a retractable stern thruster, Dynamic Positioning System, and flush-type side sweeping arms.

Caravel Group Appoints Angad Banga as Group Chief Executive Officer

The Caravel Group has appointed Angad Banga JP as Group Chief Executive Officer with immediate effect, following a long-planned succession process designed to ensure continuity and long-term growth. In his new role, Angad Banga will be responsible for performance, strategy, capital allocation and investments across the Group's three core divisions: Caravel Maritime, Caravel Resources and Caravel Asset Management. Founder Dr Harry S Banga will continue to lead the Group as Executive Chairman, focusing on long-term strategy, governance and oversight. Angad Banga has been with The Caravel Group since its inception and most recently served as Group Chief Operating Officer, playing a key role in transforming the business into a diversified global enterprise. The leadership transition reinforces the Group's commitment to disciplined governance, operational excellence and sustainable growth.



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DG Shipping Updates

JANUARY 2026

What Seafarers Need to Know |

January 2026 saw several important developments from the Directorate General of Shipping that directly impact Indian seafarers and the wider maritime community. A key regulatory move was the revocation of General Orders No. 1, 2 and 3 of 2018, reinforcing priority for Indian-flagged vessels in coastal trade. This is expected to support domestic shipping and create stronger employment opportunities for Indian seafarers.

On the digital front, DG Shipping continued the transition to the e-Samudra portal, advising seafarers to update their registered mobile numbers and email IDs to ensure uninterrupted access to certificates, records, and future services. Seafarer welfare also received a boost with the launch of a 24x7 Seafarers Facilitation Counter at Mumbai Airport (T2) on a pilot basis, aimed at assisting crew during travel and transit.



Speaking at COMARSEM 2026 in Kochi, DG Shipping Shyam Jagannathan highlighted that over 90 per cent of India's trade by volume moves by sea, placing seafarers at the heart of India's economic growth under the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision. He emphasised green shipping, modern ports, and shipbuilding expansion, noting that sustainability and skills will be key to future maritime careers.

Key Points for Seafarers

- Revocation of old General Orders: Orders No. 1, 2, and 3 of 2018 revoked, prioritising Indian-flagged vessels in coastal trade, supporting domestic shipping and seafarer employment.
- e-Samudra portal update: Seafarers should update mobile numbers and email IDs to ensure smooth migration of certificates and records.
- Seafarer welfare initiative: 24x7 Seafarers Facilitation Counter at Mumbai Airport (T2) launched on pilot basis to assist crew during travel.
- COMARSEM 2026 insights: DG Shipping Shyam Jagannathan highlighted seafarers' role in India's trade, noting over 90% of cargo moves by sea.
- Blue Economy focus: India is emerging as a global hub with growth in ports, shipbuilding, logistics, and renewable energy.
- Green shipping push: Initiatives include carbon-neutral ports, green fuels, circular economy practices, and financial incentives for low-emission vessels.
- Career outlook: Expansion of fleet and shipbuilding capacity aims to strengthen India's maritime workforce and global competitiveness.

Union Budget charts ambitious course for Indian shipping and seafarers

Shipbuilding finance and repair ecosystem strengthened

The Union Budget has delivered a major boost to India's maritime ambitions with the proposal of a ₹25,000 crore Maritime Development Fund to support shipbuilding and ship repair through long-term, low-cost finance. With government participation capped at 49 percent, the fund will mobilise private and institutional capital to revive domestic shipyards. The extension of Basic Customs Duty exemptions on shipbuilding raw materials for ten years, combined with support for standard vessel designs, series construction and modular shipbuilding, is expected to reduce costs, shorten delivery timelines and improve global competitiveness. Dedicated ship-repair clusters at ports and inland locations will further support fleet maintenance and create shore-based maritime employment.

Indian-flag shipping, coastal trade and ports in focus

The Budget signals a strong policy push to expand Indian-flagged tonnage and reduce reliance on foreign vessels for overseas and coastal trade. Incentives to promote coastal cargo movement, integration of coastal shipping with inland waterways and support for Indian-owned container and bulk capacity are aimed at shifting cargo from road and rail to sea and rivers. Continued investment under Sagarmala, development of deep-sea ports and transshipment hubs, and improved last-mile connectivity are expected to retain Indian cargo within domestic ports and lower logistics costs.

Seafarers, skills and maritime careers take centre stage

From a seafaring perspective, the Budget places welcome emphasis on maritime human capital. Expansion of maritime and inland navigation training infrastructure, Centres of Excellence and skill development programmes aligned with international standards will support seafarers, river pilots and marine engineers. As shipbuilding, coastal shipping, inland water transport and ship recycling expand, demand for trained officers, ratings and shore-based maritime professionals is set to rise. The extension of the tonnage tax regime to inland water vessels and proposed regulatory reforms to simplify certification and compliance are also expected to improve employment stability and career progression for Indian seafarers, reinforcing India's position as a leading global maritime workforce.

Key Maritime Highlights

- ₹25,000 crore Maritime Development Fund proposed to provide long-term, low-cost finance for shipbuilding and ship repair, with government stake capped at 49 percent.
- Customs duty exemption on shipbuilding raw materials, components and consumables extended for ten years to improve cost competitiveness of Indian yards.
- Strong push for standard vessel designs, series construction and modular shipbuilding to reduce build time and costs.
- Development of dedicated ship-repair clusters at major ports and select inland locations, generating maritime and technical employment.
- Policy thrust to expand Indian-flagged tonnage and reduce dependence on foreign-owned vessels in overseas and coastal trade.
- Coastal cargo promotion and integration with inland waterways to shift freight from road and rail to sea and rivers.
- Continued investment under Sagarmala for port modernisation, mechanisation, deep-sea ports and transshipment hubs.
- Focus on multimodal logistics to reduce logistics costs and cargo dwell time through better port, rail and road connectivity.
- Expansion of maritime and inland navigation training infrastructure and Centres of Excellence aligned with international standards.
- Improved career opportunities for seafarers, river pilots and marine engineers as shipping, shipbuilding and inland water transport grow.
- Extension of the tonnage tax regime to inland water transport vessels to encourage private investment.
- Proposed regulatory and legislative reforms to simplify vessel registration, certification, safety and carriage by sea operations.

RE-IMAGINING MARITIME COMPETENCE

RISQ Series | Article 25
Author: Capt. Robert Vaz, Chief
Operating Officer, Navguide Solutions

“Mentoring never goes out of style.”

Seafaring is a noble profession, but it comes with a set of precarious challenges. Our multifaceted profession requires a unique blend of knowledge, skill, compatibility, adaptability, and, of course, lifelong learning. We learn a lot at maritime institutes, from our professors, books, and digital platforms, but the real learning happens mainly after hands-on experience, I mean, on-the-job training. That’s why mentorship plays a pivotal role in learning at sea.

As soon as we hear the word mentor, some of us drift back to our cadet and junior officer days, thinking of those senior officers who mentored us. Surely, 20 to 30 years ago, mentoring styles were different, but we learnt a lot. If done the right way, mentoring is one of the most effective ways to learn, especially at sea.

Great mentors observe and listen, offering advice when needed. Simply said, mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction. When I sit back and recall my days as a cadet, I don’t think we had a dedicated mentor or a set time allocated for mentorship. We just worked with a fellow crew member, building that bond and trust,

which helped us and taught us a lot. I remember those short coffee breaks we had, when the Bosun would tell us about some incident on his last ship. The way most of the seafarers narrated their tales, they could grasp your full attention. Reading between the lines, there was a lot to learn.

I still remember my counterpart, the engine cadet, telling me how the Second Engineer helped him recognise machinery operations and abnormalities by sound, smell, temperature, and vibrations.



Re -Imagining Maritime Competence

Similarly, on those long transatlantic and transpacific voyages, the Captain, Chief Officer and Second Officer would reflect on their roles and guide us. Now I can confidently say that mentoring is not necessarily formal; it can be very informal, just a few minutes, yet it can make a world of difference to the Mentee and help the Mentee tackle a new job or an issue.

At sea, on the job, we face real challenges that no simulator, classroom scenario, or technical seminar can replicate. The conditions are dynamic, and several factors come into consideration; although the job may appear to be a routine task, every time we do the same task, there are several variables.

On a personal note, as a Superintendent and onboard trainer, I have conducted over 300 onboard inspections and onboard training sessions. As a trainer, it's important to respect seafarers and avoid

imposing; otherwise, juniors go into a defensive mindset. I know several second mates who come on the bridge at 10 am for coffee and then start their work. For me, a smile, a cup of coffee, and a simple, open-ended question work, and they normally open the door to a meaningful conversation.

For example, on a clear day with less traffic, when the coastline is clearly visible, I observe that the OOW is keeping a lookout but only monitoring the ECDIS and radar. He could use the coastline, lighthouses, etc., which are good cues for position fixing and visual navigation practice. Just a simple conversation on best practises for coastal navigation, in an informal and friendly tone, over a cup of coffee, works; it draws in the second mate and the Master, who may share their experience. Within minutes, we can get the ball rolling on coastal navigation. These tips and conversations are purely from experience and cannot be found in a classroom.

I remember my first trip as second mate, when I had to chart courses from Gibraltar to the Suez Canal. My Captain gave me valuable tips on the currents and traffic, and after I went through the sailing directions, it was very clear and made my job relatively easier.

Mentorship plays a critical role in this process, and the experience is unparalleled. I still remember everything my Master told me, even after several decades. A senior officer has accumulated decades of knowledge and can provide valuable insights. A senior Master or Chief Engineer's ability to share that knowledge and invaluable insights is priceless and cannot be learnt from textbooks.

Several factors can affect mentoring. For example, cultural differences, sarcasm, lack of trust, lack of motivation, lack of interest from either the mentor or the mentees, hectic voyages, and the gap just widens. Also, one very important factor that is often ignored is that some seniors confidently impose their views, even though they may not be aware of the actual facts. As a result, the ego comes to the forefront, and juniors may suffer, and incorrect advice may be given.



Re -Imagining Maritime Competence

In this era of digitalisation, technology has introduced new dimensions to mentoring at sea.

Navguide Solutions' Application "Guide2inspections" is one such digital mentoring platform. In fact, most questions have three levels of guidance. There is a note that explains the question and what

has to be inspected. This is accompanied by a photograph, and if it's still not clear, there are short, crisp 2- to 4-minute microlearning videos. These are actual videos and photographs onboard ships, not AI-generated or animated content, so seafarers can feel an immediate connection.

Surely, this is no replacement for mentoring by seniors, especially that mutual bond, mutual respect, and empathy. Informal mentoring not only helps develop key technical skills but also strengthens the personal connection and builds a stronger bond on board. However, when this is not happening,

seafarers can use the Navguide Application to clear their doubts and complete their job safely on site, as help is available at a click on their phone or tablet.

An advertisement for MSC Cruises hiring. It features a large image of a cruise ship on the right. The text on the left includes 'WE ARE HIRING', 'EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITIES TO JOIN MSC CRUISES', and a list of job opportunities under the heading 'DECK & ENGINE'. A QR code is present with the text 'Register Yourself'.

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Conclusion

The influence of a great mentor can never be overlooked. Mentoring reminds us that by nurturing juniors and building relationships, we can change lives, create opportunities for future generations, ensure the wealth of knowledge is passed on, and continue to shape the maritime industry.

As mentors, we can help tap into mentees' potential, build their confidence, and encourage them to step outside their comfort zones. Please continue to mentor your juniors onboard.

The greatest gifts we can give our juniors are our time and attention, along with sharing all the experience we have gained at sea. Yes, mentoring never goes out of style. All the best.

PILOT ON, BRAIN OFF?

Pilotage etiquette, shared con, and speaking up
without starting a war, an anthology for
sleepy seafarers

At 0312, the pilot ladder clattered, coffee cups aligned to watch the drama, and a small, indestructible human climbed aboard the MV Reasonable Doubt with the confidence of a mountain goat and the suitcase of a violinist. He introduced himself as Captain North, shook hands like a firm memo, and said the two most comforting words in shipping: “Good morning.” Ten minutes later, half the bridge team had quietly performed the ancient ritual of pilotage, the one where hearts decide whether to switch on or off. This anthology is a bedtime survival kit for those moments: etiquette without grovelling, shared con without guessing, and speaking up without starting a war. The stories are mostly true, mildly embellished, and vigorously useful.



The Welcome,
Two Captains,
One Ship.

The Master met Captain North with a PWOM-style brief: “Welcome aboard. Con is with me unless stated. Wheelhouse poster here. Local notices reviewed. Tugs: two forward, one aft. Berth 3 East. Any current traps?”

Seafarers’ bedtime stories series

North replied like a grown-up: "Flood on the stem, 1.5 knots at Half Moon. VTS wants slow bell at bends. I'll advise, please steer and work engines on my orders through the river. You keep collision avoidance and overall safety. If you're unhappy, say so."

Anthology lesson: The perfect opening is mutual clarity: who has the con, who gives engine and helm orders, who owns collision avoidance, who talks to VTS/pilot station/tugs, and how to break glass if anyone is unhappy. This takes thirty seconds and saves ten years off collective lifespans.

Checklist-but-not-lame version:

Con: Master or Pilot? If Pilot, is it "Pilot advises, Master cons," or "Pilot cons, Master supervises"?

Orders language: Standard wheel/engine phrases; avoid poetry.

Who talks: Assign one mouth to VTS, one to tugs, and one to the ship's team.

Triggers to pause: "CPA < 1.0", "visibility drops below X", "speed above Y", "anyone says 'STOP'".

The Shared Con Foxtrot

On the Reasonable Doubt, the Master kept the engine telegraph and the helm, while the pilot advised. It worked until the junior officer began an interpretive dance with the engine handles every time the pilot coughed.

Shared con rule: One driver, one narrator. If the pilot is advising, the Master repeats and orders: "Half ahead." The helmsman repeats: "Half ahead, sir." If the pilot is conning, he orders directly; the Master listens for sense like a hawk and intervenes early if the picture smells wrong. There is no third path called "we'll both sort of drive". That path ends in paperwork.

The Bridge Yoga Pose: Stand where you can see the water, feel the rudder angle, and watch the pilot's hand. If your view is a bulkhead and your situational awareness is a rumour, move.

The Polite War of Words -That Doesn't Become a War

On another ship, the pilot wanted 10 knots past a workboat because "they expect it." The Master wanted 5 because the workboat looked like a capsizing ambition. The mate wanted a biscuit.

Phrases that change outcomes without changing blood pressure:

☒ "For safety, I request we reduce to five knots passing the workboat. I will put engines to Dead Slow."

☒ "I am concerned about the CPA with that barge. Proposing starboard 10 now to open it, agree?"

☒ "I will take the con and stop the vessel. When ready, please continue." (Used sparingly, like wasabi.)

These lines do three things: state the safety concern, propose/declare an action, and invite confirmation. They avoid the two phrases that start wars: "You are wrong" and "Because I said so."

Standing order for everyone: The word "STOP" (from anyone) freezes the evolution. It is not debated. It is followed by why, what next, and who's conning.

The Pilot-Master Exchange, Five Minutes That Make or Break the Night

The best PMX sounds like this:

- ☒ Pilotage plan: Track, waypoints, wheel-over positions, speed profile, tug plan, and abort points (“If set exceeds 2 knots at Buoy 7, we hold position”).
 - ☒ Local quirks: “S-shaped bend throws you left; aim right of centre. Quayside lights hide red buoy at 23.5 km. Pilot launch chatters on 12 and annoys the VHF. Ignore.”
 - ☒ Contingencies: Engine failure, tug failure, visibility drop, VTS procedures.
 - ☒ Language: Confirm closed-loop orders: order → repeat → execute → feedback.
- If the PMX is vague, your brain should not be. Ask: “What speed do you want at Half Moon Bend?” “What CPA are you happy with at Ferry Point?” “Which side do you prefer if we meet traffic at the narrows?” Specifics convert nervy silence into teamwork.

Tug Whispering: The Dance with Rope and Pride

Our pilot called the forward tug: “On the centre lead forward, standby to push at Half Moon.” The Master told the bow team: “Heave till two turns on bitts; keep messenger lines clear.” Then everyone did the thing that prevents carnage: they stopped talking at the same time.

Good tug manners:

- ☒ One channel, one voice. The pilot speaks to tugs; the Master speaks to ship’s teams. No duet.
- ☒ Verbs not feelings: “Push 10,” “Check,” “Stop,” “Back 20.” Avoid “a little,” “kindly,” “maybe.”
- ☒ Anticipate girting like it’s tax season. Keep lead angles safe, power symmetrical, and a hand poised on the “this is silly” lever.

If a tug’s instruction sounds like a memoir, the Master can say: “Pilot, for safety I need forward tug to stop pushing while we adjust headway.”



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The VHF Opera (Special Matinee Performance)

VTS called: "Confirm starboard-to-starboard with the outbound car carrier at bend two." Our pilot replied: "Negative, port-to-port, we're already committed." The Master wrote one line on the whiteboard: "Traffic: Port-to-port at bend two. Our speed max 7." The OOW drew a quick sketch. Everyone could see the plan and hear the words.

VHF rules of thumb:

- ☒ Confirm, don't invent, COLREGs-compliant geometry.
- ☒ Short sentences beat clever ones.
- ☒ One recorder: someone writes down agreements and constraints. Memory is great until it meets adrenaline.

The Three Nightmares (True-ish tales)

A) The Micro-Helm Wobble

An OOW translated every pilot twitch into a two-degree helm flutter. The ship snakes, the pilot over-orders, the wake looks like embroidery, and the mate discretely stops breathing. Cure: Helmsman trained in rate-of-turn, not twitch-of-wrist. If pilot says "Port five, steady," hold, then steady. Do not improvise a pointillist painting of the river.

B) The Engine That Won't

Pilot: "Half ahead." Engine room: "Half ahead, chief, but we are hot and tired" (translation: alarm history long enough to be a Netflix series). The ship lurches late; the plan ages badly. Cure: Pre-pilotage engineering brief: thruster temperature margin, CPP pitch response, blackout recovery review. The pilot deserves to know if your engine is an opera singer or a jazz musician.

C) The Human Bookmark

Cadet glued to the radar, repeating range and bearing like a Gregorian chant; nobody was listening because nobody asked.

Cure: Give the cadet useful chores: time to wheel over, PI line monitoring, VHF scribes, tug orders board. If you treat a trainee like furniture, you'll get furniture-level help.



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Speaking Up, The Magic of “Because Safety.”

Seafarers fear three things: collision, paperwork, and offending the pilot. Only one of these matters at 6 knots approaching a bend.

Four-step speak-up spell (takes two seconds):

1. Call the risk: “CPA closing with the barge to 0.4.”
2. State the boundary: “Our minimum agreed is 1.0.”
3. Propose/declare action: “Suggest starboard 10 and slow ahead.” / “I am taking the con, stop engines.”
4. Invite/confirm: “Agree?”

It is astonishing how often this works, especially if you breathe like a human, not a siren.

What if the pilot bristles?

Use the company card: “I am required by company policy to maintain that boundary. We will adjust and then continue.” No argument, just policy, the international word for “this ship arrives with its paint attached.”

When the Master Must Take the Con (and How Not to Make It Awkward)

There comes the breath-held second when a pilotage plan deviates into nope. The Master's right (and duty) to take the con is not a duel; it's a procedure.

How to do it like a professional:

- ☒ “Captain, I am taking the con. Stop engines.”
- ☒ “Helm midships. Bow tug stop push. Aft tug check.”
- ☒ “Once stopped, we will hold position off the bend and reassess.”
- ☒ Then, and this is where legends are born, invite the pilot back once risk is controlled: “When you're ready, please continue with your plan, speed max 6.”

The goal is control, not conquest. Pilots respect firm boundaries paired with courtesy.

Everybody else respects not hitting things.

The Abort That Saved Wednesday

On Reasonable Doubt, set at bend three doubled after a passing tanker sucked the river sideways. The pilot said “We'll carry on.” The Master said “Abort point reached, holding

position midstream.” Two tugs leaned into the water like loyal dogs. The ship stopped. The river thought about its life choices. Five minutes later, they resumed and made the berth with an elegance entirely inconsistent with how close it had been.

Moral: Abort points are not decorative. They are pre-agreed exits from optimism.

Pocket Guide for the Bridge Bulkhead

Before boarding

- ☒ Pilot ladder rigged to code, life ring with line + light, lee provided.
- ☒ PMX crib ready: route sketch, speeds, CPAs, tugs, aborts, VTS quirks.
- ☒ Engine/Thruster status, limits, alarms, share bad news early.

On boarding

- ☒ Handshake + thirty-second clarity talk (con, orders, mouths, triggers).
- ☒ Closed-loop orders reminder.
- ☒ Agree STOP word.

During pilotage

- ☒ One driver, one narrator.
- ☒ Write plans on whiteboard; draw traffic.
- ☒ PI lines on radar; XTE on ECDIS fits reality.
- ☒ No duet on VHF; no parallel conversations.
- ☒ Speak up with the four-step spell.
- ☒ Invite cadets into real tasks.

If things smell wrong

- ☒ State risk - boundary - action - confirm.
- ☒ If needed: "I take the con, stop engines." Then reset, resume with courtesy.

After berthing

- ☒ Thank pilot. Debrief what surprised us, what we'd change, and what worked. Write one line in the night order book so tomorrow isn't amazed by the same thing.

Short Scenes from the River of Truths

- ☒ The Polite U-Turn: Pilot wants to spin at the knuckle "to save time." The Master: "We will use the planned turning basin. I prefer saving the ship."
- ☒ The Heroic Tug: Aft tug skipper says, "We can do it at eight knots." The Master smiles: "We won't try."
- ☒ The Silent Watchkeeper: OOW sees a CPA squeeze to 0.3 and swallows it. The Second whispers: "Say it, or wear it." OOW speaks; life improves.

Etiquette Without Apology

Pilots are not guests; they are specialists. Treat them like colleagues who know your river better than you do, and treat yourself like the person responsible for ship, crew, cargo, and company. You can serve tea without surrendering judgment.

Things that feel like deference but are actually good seamanship:

- ☒ Asking specifics (speeds, CPAs, which side at meeting points).
- ☒ Repeating orders loud enough for the log to hear.
- ☒ Drawing the plan where the AB on lookout can point at it.
- ☒ Saying thank you when the pilot adjusts based on your concern.

Things that feel like boldness but are actually risk:

- ☒ Letting a tug plan morph on the fly without deck readiness.
- ☒ Muting unease because the pilot is charming.
- ☒ Treating the VHF like Tinder for passing arrangements.
- ☒ Believing that being stand-on makes you bulletproof.

Lullaby at the Berth

At 0547 the Reasonable Doubt pressed a fender with the gentleness of a cat finding a sunbeam. Springs ran, the shore gang waved, and the pilot wrote something in a handwriting that will be studied by cryptographers. He shook the Master's hand and said, "Good ship. Good team."

What made it good wasn't magic. It was etiquette without flattery, shared con without ambiguity, and speaking up without theatrics. It was a PMX with specifics, tugs treated like partners, a VHF that sang short songs, and a bridge where anyone could say STOP and be right.

So here's your bedtime promise: Pilot on does not mean brain off. It means brains together, yours for the ship, theirs for the river, and everyone's for the small patch of world where steel meets water and reputations meet gravity. Tape the pocket guide to the bulkhead, rehearse the four-step spell, and keep the whiteboard pen where courage can find it.

Sleep well. The river will still be there in the morning. And so, if you do this right, you will paint.



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