



Ministry of Ports,
Shipping and Waterways
Government of India



Seafarer's SECURITY, SAFETY & WELFARE

AND

Inauguration of the E-SAMUDRA PROJECT

Interaction of the Hon'ble Union Cabinet Minister, PSW
with stakeholders on Seafarer Security, Safety & Seafarer Welfare
and Inauguration of the E-Samudra Project



SATURDAY,
08 AUGUST 2026



11:00 A.M.
ONWARDS



TAJ LANDS END,
MUMBAI

EVENT REPORT



SAFE SEAFARERS • SECURE SHIPPING • STRONGER INDIA



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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND



The **Interaction of the Hon'ble Union Cabinet Minister, Ports, Shipping and Waterways with Stakeholders on Seafarer Security, Safety and Seafarer Welfare, and Inauguration of the E-Samudra Project**, held on **8 August 2026** at **Taj Lands End, Mumbai**, represented a significant institutional moment in India's maritime governance calendar. Conceived as a direct, high-level engagement between Government leadership and the maritime ecosystem, the interaction brought together senior Ministry and DGMA officials, port authorities, security agencies, industry, welfare institutions and the seafaring community under one programme.

The event was organised by the **Directorate General of Maritime Administration (DGMA)**, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Government of India, and was structured to place **seafarer security, safety and welfare** at the centre of the day's proceedings, alongside the formal inauguration of **e-Samudra**, an integrated digital platform for maritime administration.

1.1 Purpose of the Interaction

India is one of the world's largest suppliers of skilled seafarers, with Indian maritime professionals serving across international fleets and contributing significantly to global trade, logistics and supply chains. While this global engagement underscores India's maritime strength, it also places an obligation on national institutions to ensure that Indian seafarers operate within a framework that guarantees **fair treatment, safety, welfare and dignity**.

In his Welcome Address, the Additional Director General of Maritime Administration described the purpose of the interaction directly: to create a bridge between government at the top level and the RPSLs, cadets and seafarers working at the ground level. The interaction was therefore designed as a two-way exchange. The Ministry and DGMA set out what has been built and what is being built; industry, unions and service providers were invited to identify the practical problems that remain.

The interaction sought to:

- Provide **direct access** to welfare schemes and institutional support.
- Enable **dialogue** between seafarers, industry and regulators.
- Explain contemporary security challenges, including geopolitical risk, abandonment and recruitment fraud.
- Formally launch **e-Samudra**, in line with the principles of Ease of Doing Business and the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047.

1.2 India's Growing Seafarer Workforce

India's rise in the global seafarer market was the single most cited fact of the day. The Additional Director General told the gathering that India currently has approximately **3.23 lakh active seafarers**, representing more than **12.16 per cent** of the global seafaring workforce, and that India now stands **second in the world**, behind the Philippines.

The DGMA presentation placed this growth in a longer frame, citing a rise of **213 per cent between 2013 and 2025**, and India's movement from fifth position in 2021 to second position in 2026 in the international figures referred to during the presentation. The ambition set out during the event is to reach approximately **20 per**

cent of the global seafarer workforce by 2030, in line with the Maritime India Vision.

The Additional Director General stressed that DGMA monitors the professional life of a seafarer from the point of admission to a Maritime Training Institute, through on board training, examinations and certification, and onward through professional life, on the basis that **the man behind the machine is equally important**.

1.3 A Changing Security Environment

Indian seafarers now work across several routes where conflict, piracy or instability are active concerns. The proceedings did not treat maritime security as an abstract subject. The DGMA presentation described four current areas of concern: The **Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf region**; the **Red Sea and Gulf of Aden**; the **Black Sea**, in the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict; and **piracy off Somalia**. The detailed incident figures for each are set out in Chapter 13 of this report.

The Secretary described the Ministry as having been directed to follow a whole-of-government approach, working continuously with other ministries, with Indian embassies and missions abroad, with the Coast Guard and with all concerned agencies. The Welcome Address recorded that, with this coordination, more than **four thousand Indian seafarers** were brought back to India from the Gulf region during the recent crisis.

1.4 Structure of this Report

This report follows the actual sequence of proceedings on 8 August 2026, while preserving the official programme structure. It records the ceremonial opening, the leadership addresses, the DGMA presentation on seafarer security and welfare, the inauguration of e-Samudra, the Hon'ble Minister's address, the seafarers' welfare initiatives, the technical session on security and digital governance, the stakeholder question-and-answer session, and the outcomes and closing of the programme.

2. OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMME STRUCTURE AND INAUGURAL SESSION DESIGN

2.1 Conceptual Design of the Interaction

The interaction was conceptualised as a **multi-dimensional engagement platform**, distinct from a conventional ceremonial event. Rather than a one-way address to a passive audience, the programme was designed around presentations, an inauguration, and a dedicated question-and-answer session with industry.

The structure reflected a deliberate design philosophy: policy first explained, then demonstrated, and finally tested directly against stakeholder experience.

2.2 Institutional Participants

The event brought together representatives of the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority, the Mumbai Port Authority, the Shipping Corporation of India, the Indian Port Rail and Ropeway Corporation Limited, the Indian Register of Shipping, the Indian Navy, the Indian Coast Guard, Indian Customs, the Ministry of External Affairs, the Bureau of Immigration, the Protector of Emigrants, Recruitment and Placement Service Licensees (RPSLs), seafarer unions, shipping lines, the Seafarers' Welfare Fund Society, the Seamen's Provident Fund Organisation, Maritime Training Institutes, maritime associations and cadets.

2.3 Day Structure: Three Sessions

The approved Minute-to-Minute Programme organised the day into three sessions.

Session	Timing	Description
Session I – Inaugural Session	1100 – 1200 hrs	Chaired by the Hon'ble Union Cabinet Minister: ceremonial opening, leadership addresses, DGMA presentation and inauguration of e-Samudra
Session II – Seafarers' Welfare Initiatives	1200 – 1300 hrs	SWFS, Seafarers' Welfare Clubs, Sagar Mein Samman and Sagar Mein Yog, for delegates other than RPSLs and cadets

Session	Timing	Description
Session III – Technical Session	1400 – 1515 hrs	Chaired by the Secretary: seafarer security, tracking, LRIT-MMDAC, e-NAVIK and a question-and-answer session with RPSLs and shipping lines

2.4 Significance of the Venue and Date

The interaction was held at **Taj Lands End, Mumbai**, on **Saturday, 8 August 2026**. Mumbai's standing as a principal maritime and port city made it a fitting venue for an interaction bringing together port authorities, shipping lines, RPSLs and seafarer welfare institutions from across the country.

3. CEREMONIAL OPENING

The programme opened with the formal welcome of the Hon'ble Union Cabinet Minister and senior leadership, followed by the National Song, the ceremonial lighting of the lamp, and the welcome of the dais dignitaries.

3.1 Arrival of the Hon'ble Union Cabinet Minister

The Hon'ble Union Cabinet Minister, Shri **Sarbananda Sonowal**, arrived at the venue to a formal welcome. The Emcee extended a heartfelt welcome on behalf of DGMA to all distinguished dignitaries, senior government officials, representatives of maritime organisations, industry leaders, members of the seafaring fraternity and every delegate present.

3.2 National Song

The formal proceedings commenced with the rendition of **Vande Mataram**. The gathering rose for the National Song, which marked the ceremonial opening of a programme centred on India's maritime workforce and the institutions responsible for protecting and supporting it.

3.3 Ceremonial Lighting of the Lamp



The ceremonial lighting of the lamp by the Hon'ble Union Cabinet Minister and senior Ministry and DGMA leadership.

The Hon'ble Union Cabinet Minister was joined by the Secretary, the Adviser to the Indian Ports Association, the Director General of Maritime Administration and the Additional Director General of Maritime Administration for the ceremonial lighting of the lamp. The official script described the ceremony as signifying **the triumph of knowledge over ignorance, hope over uncertainty, and collective resolve towards a brighter future.**

3.4 Welcome of Dais Dignitaries

The dignitaries were formally welcomed with the presentation of bouquets. Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, Hon'ble Union Cabinet Minister, was presented a bouquet by Shri Shyam Jagannathan, IAS, Director General of Maritime Administration. This was followed by the presentation of a bouquet to Shri Vijay Kumar, IAS, Secretary,

by Shri Shyam Jagannathan, IAS, Director General of Maritime Administration. Shri Rajesh Kumar Sinha, IAS, Adviser, Indian Ports Association, was then presented a bouquet by Shri Sushil Mansing Khopade, IPS, Additional Director General of Maritime Administration.

4. PRINCIPAL DIGNITARIES AND SPEAKERS

4.1 Dais Dignitaries

Name	Designation
Shri Sarbananda Sonowal	Hon'ble Union Cabinet Minister, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, as Guest of Honour
Shri Vijay Kumar, IAS	Secretary, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways
Shri Rajesh Kumar Sinha, IAS	Adviser, Indian Ports Association
Shri Shyam Jagannathan, IAS	Director General of Maritime Administration
Shri Sushil Mansing Khopde, IPS	Additional Director General of Maritime Administration



Principal dignitaries on the dais during the inaugural session at Taj Lands End, Mumbai.

5. WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR GENERAL OF MARITIME ADMINISTRATION



Welcome Address by Shri Sushil Mansing Khopde,IPS, Addl. DGMA

Shri Sushil Mansing Khopde, IPS, Additional Director General of Maritime Administration, delivered the Welcome Address, which opened the formal proceedings of the day.

5.1 Context

The Additional Director General described the event as a direct bridge between government at the top level and the RPSLs, cadets and seafarers working at the ground level. He welcomed the RPSL representatives and cadets specifically, noting that the interaction was planned around them.

5.2 A Continuous Professional Relationship

A central theme of the address was DGMA's continuous institutional responsibility towards the seafarer, monitored from the point of admission to a Maritime Training Institute, through onboard training, examinations, certification and subsequent professional life. He explained that Indian seafarers are, in effect, **ambassadors of India** abroad: the way they behave, speak and apply their skills shapes how other countries view the country.

He underlined that behind any business, the human being matters, and that **the man behind the machine is equally important** and has to be nurtured.

5.3 Crisis Response and Partnership

The Additional Director General described close monitoring of the recent geopolitical crisis by the Hon'ble Minister and the Secretary, and the formation of a dedicated quick response team within DGMA. He recorded that more than **four thousand seafarers** were repatriated from the Gulf region with the help of the Ministry of External Affairs, Indian missions abroad and the RPSLs, describing the effort as **not easy**, and thanking the RPSLs for their instrumental role.

5.4 A Call for Stakeholder Feedback

The Welcome Address established the event as a two-way engagement. Stakeholders were asked to identify bottlenecks and to say how the system could be improved, on the basis that a system already in place always leaves room for improvement. Government would set out its initiatives; industry and the seafaring ecosystem would supply the operational feedback needed to improve them.

6. ADDRESS BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF MARITIME ADMINISTRATION



Address by Shri Shyam Jagannathan, IAS, DGMA

Shri Shyam Jagannathan, IAS, Director General of Maritime Administration, addressed the gathering following the Welcome Address. His remarks placed the day's discussions within the wider transformation taking place in India's maritime administration, with particular emphasis on digital governance, seafarer welfare, maritime security and institutional coordination.

6.1 Setting Clear Context

The Director General highlighted the need for a maritime administration that is more accessible, transparent and responsive to the changing needs of seafarers and other maritime stakeholders. India's growing seafarer workforce, increasing maritime activity and the changing security environment require governance systems that can respond quickly while remaining easy to access and comply with. The address also reflected the wider role being played by DGMA in supporting seafarers throughout their professional journey through regulatory processes, welfare support, crisis response, digital services and coordination with various government and maritime institutions. The overall approach was presented as one in which technology and institutional reform should work together to make maritime administration more efficient while keeping the seafarer at the centre.

6.2 Digital Governance

A major theme of the address was the movement towards digital-first governance in the maritime sector. The Director General referred to the need to move away from multiple, fragmented processes towards integrated systems and a common digital interface. The concept of a single-window digital interface was highlighted as an important step in reducing physical interaction, improving transparency and making regulatory services easier to access. The approach also supports faster processing and better visibility of applications and services. The address referred to the wider digital ecosystem being developed by DGMA, including e-Samudra and other connected systems, as part of this transformation. The objective is not simply to digitise existing paperwork, but to create a more coordinated system in which people, processes and technology work together. The Director General also referred to the importance of a whole-of-government approach in maritime administration, including coordination with agencies and institutions involved in maritime security, information sharing and seafarer protection. This broader approach is intended to

support a maritime ecosystem in which every Indian seafarer is better protected, supported and connected to the institutions responsible for their welfare.

7. ADDRESS BY THE SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS



Address by Shri Vijay Kumar, IAS, Secretary, MoPSW

Shri Vijay Kumar, IAS, Secretary, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, addressed the gathering after the Director General. His remarks connected India's rapid growth in the global seafarer workforce with the need for continued policy reform, better service delivery and stronger protection for Indian seafarers.

7.1 From Growth to Global Leadership

The Secretary noted that India's active seafarer base has grown by **more than three times** in the last decade, taking the country from fifth position in the world to the **second-largest supplier of seafarers globally**. He thanked seafarers, unions and RPSLs for this achievement, and was clear that the goal is to become **number one in the world**. He invited stakeholders to identify the policy measures required to sustain that progress, saying the Ministry would be more than willing to listen and to implement.

7.2 Safety and Security as a Ministry Priority

The Secretary emphasised that safety and security of Indian seafarers is the **topmost agenda** for the Ministry, pursued through a whole-of-government approach involving other ministries, embassies and missions abroad, and the Coast Guard. He noted that more than **sixty ships** of Indian interest were evacuated from the Gulf despite the crisis.

He described the goal of tracking every Indian seafarer, whether on an Indian-flag or foreign-flag vessel, through a dashboard planned for launch on **15 August**, and noted that **e-NAVIK**, launched in May, already provides a 24×7 multi-channel mechanism with real-time tracking of grievances.

7.3 Seafarer Welfare and Immigration

The Secretary listed the welfare measures available through the Seafarers' Welfare Fund Society, covering survivor benefits, maternity, old age, education, career progression, critical illness, death on board, scholarships for children and support for abandoned seafarers, including immediate assistance of **ten lakh rupees** to the next of kin of seafarers who die in high-risk areas.

He referred to work with the Ministry of Home Affairs to simplify immigration and shore-leave procedures, and to **fourteen seafarers' clubs** being developed with grants of approximately **ninety-five crore rupees**. On women's participation, he noted that numbers have risen from fewer than six hundred in 2021 to more than **seven thousand**.

7.4 The Governance Principle

The Secretary set out five characteristics that regulation should have: **transparent, easy to comply with, welfare and security oriented, digital, and objective**.

“Not only more processes, but better processes. Not only more portals, but seamless interfaces. Not only announcements about welfare, but welfare benefits that actually reach the targeted audience.”

The Secretary closed by recording that the Ministry and the country are indebted to Indian seafarers, whose commitment and courage during the crisis ensured the energy and economic security of the country.

8. PRESENTATION: SEAFARER SECURITY AND WELFARE BY DGMA

Capt. Bipin Kumar, Deputy Director General, DDG-Crew, DGMA, delivered the presentation titled “**Seafarer Security and Welfare by DGMA.**”

8.1 The Seafarer in Global Trade

The presentation opened with the seafarer’s place in world trade: over **90 per cent** of global trade is carried by sea, and under the **Merchant Shipping Act, 2025**, seafarers are recognised as key workers. It reported a rise of **213 per cent** in India’s seafarer numbers between 2013 and 2025, and growth in the number of women seafarers from about 1,600 in 2021 to more than **7,000 in 2025**, under Sagar Mein Samman, introduced through DGMA order 18 of 2024.

8.2 Crisis Response in Numbers

The presentation described a crisis group operating twenty-four hours a day, reporting the following figures from the Gulf crisis:

- More than **16,000 calls** monitored.
- More than **41,000 emails** handled.
- More than **4,000 seafarers** evacuated.

The presentation set out the humanitarian support available to families: immediate assistance of **ten lakh rupees** through SWFS for loss of life in High Risk War Zone Areas, a dedicated welfare counsellor in contact with the next of kin, RPSLs engaging with protection and indemnity insurers, and close monitoring of settlements by DGMA.

8.3 RPSLs as Partners in Welfare

A significant theme of the presentation was the changing role of the Recruitment and Placement Service Licensees. The presentation stated plainly that **RPSLs are not merely recruitment agencies but critical partners in the DGMA welfare ecosystem**, beyond compliance and recruitment, and recorded that several RPSLs demonstrated exceptional commitment during the recent crisis.

The presentation reported **524 active RPSLs**, with 48 in Maharashtra, and referred to circular 47 of 2026, dated 5 August 2026, requiring shipowners, ship managers and RPSL agencies to inform the DGCOM Centre before transit and to obtain the consent of Indian seafarers concerned.

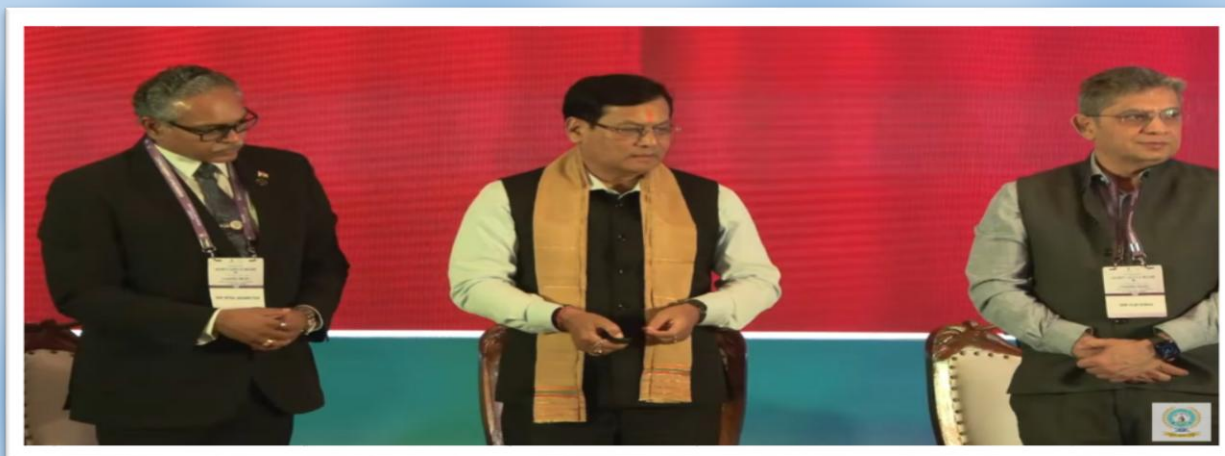
8.4 Challenges and Measures

Challenge	Measure described
Immigration and shore-leave difficulties	Standard operating procedure notified; consultations with MHA through MoPSW; SWFS support for immigration posts
Seafarer grievances	24×7 grievance redressal portal in operation
Abandonment	Regular meetings with ILO, IMO and ITF; quarterly review chaired by the Secretary
Lack of awareness of welfare schemes	Symposiums and communication through social media
Unfair manning practices	MoU with QCI for third-party audits; limit of two RPSLs per vessel; new job portal under development
Documentation failure and offloading	Verification counter at Terminal 2, Mumbai
Conduct at sea	Publication of a standard seafarers' code of conduct

The presentation closed by describing these initiatives as reflecting a **seafarer-first vision** and a future-ready maritime ecosystem, with the horizon ahead promising stronger protection, greater opportunity and global leadership for Indian seafarers.

9. INAUGURATION OF THE E-SAMUDRA PROJECT

9.1 The Inauguration



The Hon'ble Union Cabinet Minister inaugurating the e-Samudra Project, with the dais dignitaries.

The Hon'ble Union Cabinet Minister formally inaugurated **e-Samudra**, joined on stage by the dignitaries on the dais. The inauguration was followed by a film setting out the platform and its modules. Following the inauguration, Shri **Praneet Choudhary**, Deputy Director General, DGMA and Nodal Officer for the implementation of the e-Samudra Project, together with representatives of the implementation agency, **CMS Computers**, felicitated the Hon'ble Minister.



The Hon'ble Union Cabinet Minister felicitated by the e-Samudra Project Implementation Agency CMS.

9.2 What is e-Samudra?

e-Samudra is an **integrated digital platform for maritime administration**. It brings multiple maritime services onto a single platform instead of leaving them spread across separate processes and offices. The official description sets out four benefits: it reduces the need for physical interaction with the administration, it improves transparency, it allows an applicant to track an application in real time, and it makes services faster and more predictable.

The platform is directed at seafarers, shipowners, ports, service providers, recognised organisations, maritime training institutions and regulatory authorities, advancing the vision of **Ease of Doing Business** by making maritime services more accessible, efficient and citizen-centric.

9.3 Modules and Services

The film shown at the inauguration described e-Samudra as a common-access digital ecosystem connecting people, processes and technology across India's maritime sector, built with the technology partner **CMS Computers**.

Module	What it covers
Seafarer services	Profile creation, CDC and CoP applications, renewals, approvals and digital certificates, with real-time tracking
Ship registration	Digital and faster ship registration, aligned with the Merchant Shipping Act, 2025
Ship regulation and survey	Registration, surveys, authentication, digital marking and regulatory services
Charter permission	Digitised approval of charter permissions and licence-related processes
Recognised organisations	Onboarding, certification, reporting and renewals, with compliance review
Medical	Approval and renewal of DGMA-approved doctors and digital issuance of medical certificates

Module	What it covers
Finance and administration	Integrated digital management of budgeting, accounts, audit and public procurement

The e-Samudra film showcased the following for the platform: **15 digital modules**, **72 online services**, and **13 regional offices connected**. It described integrated digital workflows as significantly reducing processing time, with several citizen services intended to be delivered on the same day.

10. ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE UNION CABINET MINISTER



Speech by Hon'ble Union Minister, MoPSW, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal

Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, Hon'ble Union Cabinet Minister, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, delivered the principal leadership address of the inaugural session.

10.1 The Central Proposition

“India’s maritime growth must be built around people, performance and integration.”

The Hon'ble Minister referred to India's transformation over the past decade and to the ambition of reaching approximately **20 per cent** of the global seafarer workforce, which he said would require the best possible effort from the whole ecosystem.

10.2 Security and Safe Repatriation

The Hon'ble Minister acknowledged the difficulty of the recent crisis response, observing that it is **not easy to bring back more than four thousand people to the nation safely**, and describing this as an initiative that will have to continue and be sustained with the support and cooperation of the industry.

10.3 Shipbuilding and Industrial Capability

The address extended beyond seafarers to India's maritime industrial base. The Minister cited the placing of container ship orders with **Cochin Shipyard** by **CMA CGM** as evidence of growing international confidence in Indian shipbuilding, and stated that India has become the **number one nation in the world in ship recycling**, with an ambition to become one of the leading shipbuilding nations by 2047.

He noted that scope has been created for more than **seven thousand women seafarers**, and observed that ninety-five per cent of cargo is handled through this Ministry, asking who takes care of that cargo on the ship: the answer, he said, is the seafarer.

10.4 Integration

The closing message of the address concerned the way the ecosystem should work together.

“Don't try to walk in silos. Walk in integration.”

Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, Hon'ble Union Cabinet Minister

The Hon'ble Minister linked integration directly to capability, saying that it will give power, wisdom, knowledge and skill, and thanked DGMA and the Secretary and his team for working to integrate all stakeholders on the same platform.

10.5 Ministerial Takeaways

The Hon'ble Minister's address reinforced a set of broad priorities for the maritime sector. These included protecting every seafarer through continued crisis

preparedness and coordinated response; expanding India's seafarer workforce and strengthening its global position; improving integration between Government, industry and maritime institutions; using digital governance to improve transparency and efficiency; strengthening maritime industrial capability through shipbuilding, ship repair and related sectors; and ensuring that reforms are implemented at the required speed and scale. The Hon'ble Minister also linked these efforts to the long-term objectives of the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047. Together, these priorities brought the major themes of the inaugural session into a common framework for future action

10.6 Felicitations BY DGMA



Presentation of the memento to the Chief Guest and Dignitaries by DGMA and Addl DGMA.

Following the address, mementos were presented to the Hon'ble Union Cabinet Minister and to the Secretary by the Director General of Maritime Administration, and to the Adviser, Indian Ports Association, by the Additional Director General.

11. VOTE OF THANKS AND FORMAL CONCLUSION OF THE INAUGURAL SESSION

11.1 Context and Purpose of the Vote of Thanks

Dr. Sudhir Kohakade, Deputy Director General, DGMA, delivered the Vote of Thanks bringing the Inaugural Session to a close.

11.2 Acknowledgement of Dignitaries and Leadership

Gratitude was expressed to the Hon'ble Union Cabinet Minister for gracing the session and inaugurating e-Samudra, and to the Secretary, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, for his guidance.

11.3 Closure of the Inaugural Session

With the Vote of Thanks, Session I – the Inaugural Session, chaired by the Hon'ble Union Cabinet Minister – concluded, and the programme transitioned into the parallel segments: the Hon'ble Minister's separate interaction with cadets and RPSLs, and the Seafarers' Welfare Initiatives segment for the remaining delegates, described in Chapter 12 of this report.

12. SEAFARERS' WELFARE INITIATIVES

Following the conclusion of the Inaugural Session, the remaining delegates continued with the dedicated segment titled “**Seafarers’ Welfare Initiatives: Seafarers’ Club, Sagar Mein Samman and Sagar Mein Yog.**” The session was framed around a broad understanding of seafarer wellbeing extending beyond regulatory compliance to social security, welfare infrastructure, mental wellbeing, inclusivity and recognition of the contribution of Indian seafarers.

12.1 SWFS: Institutional Role and Financial Architecture



Presentation by Capt. Nitin Mukesh, DDG Crew, DGMA on Seafarers Welfare

Capt. Nitin Mukesh, Deputy Director General, Crew (Welfare), DGMA, Member Secretary of the Seafarers’ Welfare Fund Society (SWFS) and Commissioner of the Seamen’s Provident Fund Organisation (SPFO), delivered the institutional welfare presentation.

The **Seafarers’ Welfare Fund Society** was established by the Government of India in **1964** to safeguard the welfare of Indian seafarers and their families. The presentation set out the following financial position:

- **₹812 crore** – welfare fund corpus.
- **₹769 crore** – seafarers’ gratuity funds.
- **₹40.85 crore** – administrative funds.

An important part of the presentation concerned a review of death and missing-seafarer cases, referring to **392 cases** reviewed, with 90 awaiting responses from RPSL companies. Following the review, a comprehensive rationalisation of the welfare framework was carried out through **DGMA circular 39 of 2026**, consolidating **twelve schemes** into a single, more uniform process.

12.2 The Welfare Schemes

Scheme	Who it supports	Assistance stated
Survivor Benefit	Family of a deceased Indian seafarer	Increased from ₹2 lakh to ₹6 lakh
Invalidity Benefit	A seafarer declared permanently unfit	Increased from ₹2 lakh to ₹6 lakh
Death on Board	Ex-gratia where death occurs on board	₹6 lakh
High-Risk Area Death	Seafarers who die in high-risk waters	₹10 lakh
Maternity Benefit	Eligible Indian women seafarers	Increased from ₹25,000 to ₹50,000
Family Benefit (Education)	Dependent children of Indian seafarers	Up to ₹1 lakh
Old Age Benefit	Retired seafarers, by age threshold	₹1 lakh at the higher threshold
Critical Illness	Seafarers with notified critical illness	Up to ₹2 lakh
Career Progression (COC)	Ratings who qualify as officers	₹2 lakh; introduced January 2026
Ex-Gratia (Abandonment)	Families of stranded/abandoned seafarers	Increased from ₹10,000 to ₹20,000 per month

12.3 Faster Welfare Delivery

The presentation reported that the time taken for financial assistance to reach a beneficiary had reduced from approximately **eleven days** before 2026 to approximately **five days**, attributed to a dedicated welfare counsellor, a 24×7 response desk, a standard operating procedure, dashboard-based case tracking and direct bank credit.

Causes of remaining delay were identified candidly: applications not submitted in time, outdated contact details, delayed responses from RPSL agencies, lack of awareness among families, and incomplete documentation.

12.4 Seafarers' Welfare Clubs

The presentation then moved to physical welfare infrastructure, connecting **Seafarers' Welfare Clubs** with the standards contemplated under the **Maritime Labour Convention, 2006**, covering accommodation, food and catering, recreation, medical support, communication and administrative services.

12.5 Welfare Infrastructure Across India

The presentation reported **14 welfare infrastructure projects**, with more than **₹95 crore** being provided towards the clubs, across locations including Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, JNPA, Goa, Kochi and Kerala on the western coast, and Chennai, Kamarajar, Visakhapatnam, Kolkata, Haldia and Taratala on the eastern coast, with work also directed at Patna and the northern sector.

The stated ambition is to increase annual utilisation of the welfare club network from approximately **50,000** seafarers to nearly **2 lakh**, while achieving full alignment with international welfare standards.

12.6 Digital Access to Welfare

A **unified online booking system** for Seafarers' Welfare Clubs, working in a manner similar to online hotel booking, was described as contracted and expected to be operational across the eastern and western coasts within **six to seven months**.

12.7 Sagar Mein Samman

Mrs. Ambika Singh, Joint Chairperson, Sagar Mein Samman, and Senior Manager – Marketing, Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority, presented **Sagar Mein Samman**,

described as a strategic DGMA initiative aimed at creating a more equitable, inclusive and respectful environment for women seafarers.

“Gender inclusion should move from being viewed simply as a welfare concern to becoming an integral part of maritime governance and institutional responsibility.”

The presentation reported that registered women seafarers increased by **739 per cent**, from **1,699 in 2015** to **14,255 in 2024**. Institutionalised through **DGMA order 18 of 2024**, the initiative is supported by a **five-year action plan framework** launched in May 2026, covering foundation and awareness, policy and system integration, scale expansion, leadership and recognition, and global positioning.

A target of **12 per cent** women’s participation in technical maritime roles was referred to, alongside the separate Maritime India Vision 2030 target of 2 to 3 per cent of Indian seafarers overall.

12.8 Sagar Mein Yog

Miss Chitra Rajuth, Art of Living / Shri Shri Yoga Trainer, presented **Sagar Mein Yog**, a wellbeing programme built on a knowledge partnership between the maritime administration and the Art of Living Foundation, aiming to support the seafarer **before the voyage, during the voyage, and after returning home**.

The programme addresses **ten dimensions of wellness**: physical, emotional, spiritual, economic, cultural, intellectual, occupational, climatic, social and environmental. It is supported by a dedicated Learning Management System and a training-of-trainers programme, and carries a national mandate through **director order 19 of 2024**.

“A strong ship sails on strong minds.”

Sagar Mein Yog

13. TECHNICAL SESSION: SECURITY, TRACKING AND DIGITAL GOVERNANCE

Session III, the **Technical Session with RPSLs and Shipping Lines**, was chaired by **Shri Vijay Kumar, IAS**, Secretary, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways,

and moved from policy direction to the specific systems being built for seafarer security, tracking and digital administration.

13.1 Session Purpose and Structure

The stated purpose was to deliberate on contemporary issues affecting Indian seafarers, exchange perspectives with industry stakeholders, and discuss initiatives strengthening safety, security, welfare and digital innovation. The presentation was delivered by **Capt. Bipin Kumar**, Deputy Director General, Crew (Processes), DGMA.



Presentation by Capt Bipin Kumar, DDG Crew, DGMA

Indicator	Figure stated
Active Indian seafarers	3.23 lakh
Share of the global seafaring workforce	12.16 per cent
Women seafarers	7,033
Death cases settled	319 of 406
Missing seafarer compensation cases settled	201 of 209

Indicator	Figure stated
Abandoned seafarers recorded to date	467
Grievances received in 2025	3,170

13.2 Geopolitical Security

The presentation set out the current maritime risk picture affecting Indian seafarers across four areas.

Area	Incidents	Fatalities	Injuries	Missing
Strait of Hormuz / Gulf region	37	10	10	—
Red Sea / Gulf of Aden	3	Nil	Nil	—
Black Sea	22	5	2	2
Somali piracy	5	Nil	Nil	—

Against this picture, the presentation described a **four-layer response**: proactive risk assessment and advisories, strengthened maritime security protocols, an institutional crisis response mechanism through the DGCOM Centre, and multi-stakeholder coordination across government, shipowners, RPSLs and Indian missions abroad.

13.3 Crisis Response

The presentation repeated the figures given in the morning session: more than **16,000 calls** monitored, more than **41,000 emails** handled, and more than **4,000 seafarers** repatriated. Four mechanisms operate in parallel once a seafarer is affected: immediate financial assistance of **₹10 lakh** through SWFS, employer compensation pursued through the protection and indemnity route, counselling and

welfare outreach through a designated welfare counsellor, and case-wise monitoring covering repatriation status, SWFS payment, gratuity and compensation.

Abandonment cases were reported as declining consistently, attributed to policy enforcement and inter-agency coordination with the ILO, IMO and ITF. Six root causes of abandonment were identified: inexperienced new shipowners, delayed reporting by seafarers, fraudulent recruitment agencies, invalid or expired protection and indemnity cover, weak flag-state oversight, and mismatches between the vessel recorded in Form 1 and the vessel on which the seafarer is actually serving.

13.4 Seafarer Tracking

The **Seafarer Tracking Dashboard** was described as a single-window platform tracking every Indian seafarer regardless of whether the vessel is Indian-flagged or foreign-flagged, providing vessel-by-vessel monitoring, crew welfare and threat-level information, and links to next-of-kin data in the event of a casualty. Consultations with RPSLs were under way, with a **beta version planned for 15 August**.

13.5 LRIT – MMDAC

A film shown during the session set out the work of the **DGCOM Centre** and the **Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT)** system, which tracks Indian-flagged vessels anywhere in the world and all ships within approximately **1,000 nautical miles** of the Indian coast, relaying position data to India's national LRIT data centre for verification, storage and near real-time display. The film cited a February 2025 rescue of eleven fishermen within twenty-four hours of a report, made possible by the system. India also serves as a regional data centre for Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

13.6 e-NAVIK

e-NAVIK, launched on **29 May** by the Hon'ble Union Cabinet Minister, was described as the first initiative of its kind by any country. It comprises four modules:

- **Grievance Redressal** – a 24×7 platform with a unique ticket identifier for each case.
- **Casualty Reporting** – a centralised crisis and casualty module.

- **RPSL Module** – licence applications, the authentic job portal and the digital Seafarers’ Employment Agreement.
- **MTI Module** – STCW compliance workflows, endorsement and batch management.

13.7 24×7 Grievance Redress

The presentation reported **3,831 grievances** received in approximately two months, against **3,170** for the whole of 2025, interpreted as a sign of greater awareness and trust rather than deteriorating conditions. A resolution rate of approximately **98.6 per cent** was reported, with grievance redressal parameters rated **4 out of 5** in portal feedback.

13.8 RPSL Accountability

The presentation set out a structured compliance framework, including inspection of RPSL companies by surveyors and the administration, a vessel restriction and blacklist mechanism (**366 vessels listed**, of which 278 restricted and 88 blacklisted), a proposed increase in the bank guarantee from ₹10 lakh to ₹25 lakh, live public access to RPSL status, a limit of **two RPSLs per vessel** by IMO number, and a memorandum of understanding with the **Quality Council of India** for third-party audits.

13.9 Preventing Recruitment Fraud

87 grievances relating to fraud and cheating were reported between September and December 2025. Seafarers were advised, before accepting employment, not to pay recruitment fees, to verify the physical presence of the RPSL office, to check RPSL validity and to authenticate documents; and after joining, to update vessel details in the CDC master profile so that DGMA receives direct visibility of the deployment.

13.10 The Connected Digital Ecosystem

The final part of the technical presentation drew the individual systems together: **e-Samudra** for maritime administration, **e-NAVIK** for seafarer-facing services, the **Seafarer Tracking Module** for location and crisis visibility, **LRIT-MMDAC** for maritime domain awareness, and an upgraded seafarer identity document, aligned with **ILO Convention 185**, for secure identification across the ecosystem. The

session concluded that protection now rests on three layers: **prevention, visibility and response.**

14. PANEL DISCUSSION ON SEAFARER WELFARE, RIGHTS AND REGULATORY CHALLENGES



The technical presentations were followed by an interactive **question-and-answer session** with representatives of RPSLs, shipping lines and other maritime stakeholders.

14.1 Context and Placement within the Day

Participants were asked to identify themselves and their organisation before putting a question, and to keep interventions brief and directly related to the subjects covered during the technical presentations.

14.2 Composition of the Panel

The exchange was conducted directly between the technical presenter, **Capt. Bipin Kumar**, and representatives of RPSLs and shipping lines present in the hall.

14.3 Key Themes and Issues Discussed

Matter raised	Response given
Whether a backup system exists for the digital platforms	Confirmed that a backup is in place
Timelines for going live, so companies can train staff	Digital employment agreement beta expected end of September; RPSL module consultation to follow the same sequence
Whether tracking covers foreign-flag vessels	Confirmed that the system does not distinguish between flags; every Indian seafarer is to be tracked
Whether position data must be entered manually	Initially manual for areas of concern only, with wider integration to follow

14.3.1 Abandonment of Seafarers, 2006

The discussion referred to the continuing relevance of the **Maritime Labour Convention, 2006** in cases of abandonment, and to the statutory powers under the **Merchant Shipping Act, 2025** enabling the Central Government and Indian missions to intervene, arrange repatriation and ensure basic necessities for abandoned seafarers.

14.3.2 Implementation of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006

Panel discussion touched on the practical implementation of MLC 2006 standards through welfare club infrastructure, onboard complaint-handling procedures, and

the escalation pathway available to a seafarer through the Designated Person Ashore or directly to DGMA.

14.3.3 Health, Safety and Wellbeing at Sea

The exchange also touched on health monitoring, fatigue management and mental health support for the active workforce, linking back to the age profile of death and missing-seafarer cases discussed during the technical presentation.

14.3.4 Regulatory Perspective from the Directorate General of Shipping

DGMA's response throughout the panel discussion emphasised that the digital systems under development are not finished products, but platforms still open to refinement based on stakeholder experience.

14.4 A Documented Stakeholder Issue: Background Verification

The most substantive intervention concerned background verification. A stakeholder explained that RPSL rules require agencies to carry out a background check on a seafarer, but that in practice the only available check is to telephone the previous employer, who is unlikely to disclose the information, both parties being bound by their own data protection obligations.

The stakeholder asked whether the forthcoming digital RPSL module could allow verification of a seafarer's record against the **Continuous Discharge Certificate**, given concerns about fraudulent agents making false entries. The response indicated that this capability is **not available in the system at present**, but that DGMA would take it up in the development of the RPSL module, with continued stakeholder consultation.

14.5 Institutional Significance of the Panel Discussion

The value of the session lay less in the individual questions than in the mechanism it demonstrated: a regulatory requirement produced an operational difficulty, the difficulty was raised directly with the officials designing the system, and it was accepted into the ongoing development of a platform not yet finalised.

“Digital governance should be built with the stakeholder, not only for the stakeholder.”

14.6 Closure of Q&A Proceedings

At the close, RPSL companies and seafarer organisations were informed that concerns or grievances should be submitted to the **Deputy Director General (Crew), DGMA**, and would be taken up further with the Ministry for consideration and necessary action.

15. VOTE OF THANKS AND FORMAL CONCLUSION OF THE PROGRAMME

15.1 Overview of Closing Proceedings

Dr. Sudhir Kohakade, Deputy Director General, DGMA, delivered the concluding Vote of Thanks, bringing together the three pillars of the day — seafarer security, seafarer safety and seafarer welfare — alongside technology-driven maritime governance through e-Samudra.

15.2 Consolidation of Key Institutional Messages

The Vote of Thanks acknowledged the active participation of RPSLs and shipping lines, whose practical experience and feedback were described as essential to translating policy initiatives into meaningful outcomes; of Customs, the Indian Navy, the Indian Coast Guard, the Ministry of External Affairs, FRRO, the Bureau of Immigration and port authorities; and of seafarer unions, shipping companies, maritime associations, the MLC Compliance Board, SWFS, SPFO and Maritime Training Institutes.

A special word of appreciation was recorded for the young cadets present, described as representing the future of Indian seafaring. Appreciation was also placed on record for the **Indian Port Rail and Ropeway Corporation Limited** and for the management and team of **Taj Lands End**.

15.3 Integration of Policy and Dialogue

The closing remarks returned to the central subject of the whole programme: Indian seafarers connect India with the world, and it is a collective responsibility to ensure that they are **safe at sea, secure in their profession, supported in times of need, and respected** for their contribution to the nation.

15.4 Stakeholder Confidence and Engagement

The proceedings demonstrated that stakeholder confidence in DGMA's systems rests on the willingness to hear operational difficulties directly and to fold them into the design of platforms still being built.

15.5 Concluding Note on Day-1

Before the conclusion of the programme, all present were requested to rise for the **National Anthem**. With the National Anthem, the proceedings of 8 August 2026 were formally brought to a close.

16. KEY TAKEAWAYS

16.1 Key Takeaways from the Event

- **Seafarer security, safety and welfare have emerged as a single, connected priority.** The event brought these areas together with digital governance, recognising that protection of seafarers cannot be addressed through isolated welfare, regulatory or security measures.
- **India's seafarer workforce has become a major national maritime asset.** With approximately **3.23 lakh active Indian seafarers** and a stated share of **12.16% of the global seafaring workforce**, the event highlighted the need to support this growth through better protection, welfare, training, regulation and employment practices.
- **Crisis preparedness and coordinated response have become critical.** The recent Gulf crisis demonstrated the importance of a dedicated and coordinated response mechanism. DGMA reported monitoring more than **16,000 calls and 41,000 emails and facilitating the repatriation of more than 4,000 seafarers**. The experience underlined the need for continued coordination among DGMA, MEA, Indian Missions, RPSLs, ship-owners and other agencies.
- **The focus is shifting from reactive welfare to faster, more accessible welfare delivery.** SWFS has rationalised its welfare framework, enhanced several benefits and reduced the reported time for assistance from around **11 days to about 5 days**. The remaining delays were linked mainly to incomplete documentation, outdated contact details, delayed RPSL responses and lack of awareness among beneficiaries.
- **Awareness of welfare schemes remains an important gap.** The event highlighted that welfare support is useful only when seafarers and their

families know what assistance is available and how to claim it. Continued outreach through symposiums, social media and other communication channels therefore remains important.

- **Digital governance is becoming the backbone of maritime administration.** The inauguration of **e-Samudra**, along with e-NAVIK, the Seafarer Tracking Module and LRIT-MMDAC, reflects a move towards integrated digital services, reduced physical interaction, real-time tracking and greater transparency.
- **Seafarer visibility is being treated as a key element of security.** The proposed Seafarer Tracking Dashboard is intended to provide visibility of Indian seafarers irrespective of whether they are serving on Indian-flag or foreign-flag vessels. This can support faster intervention during emergencies and better coordination with next of kin.
- **RPSLs are being positioned as partners in seafarer welfare, not only as recruitment entities.** At the same time, the event recognised the need for stronger accountability through inspections, vessel restrictions, public RPSL status, third-party audits and tighter recruitment controls.
- **Stakeholder feedback directly identified areas for improvement in the digital systems.** The most substantive example was the issue of **background verification of seafarers**. The stakeholder interaction identified a practical difficulty in verifying a seafarer's previous record, and DGMA indicated that the issue would be taken up during development of the RPSL module.
- **The event established stakeholder consultation as an important part of system development.** The discussions showed that digital platforms should not simply be designed and imposed; operational issues faced by RPSLs, shipping lines and seafarers need to be considered while systems are still under development.
- **Welfare is being broadened beyond financial assistance.** Seafarers' Welfare Clubs, Sagar Mein Samman and Sagar Mein Yog demonstrate a wider approach covering physical facilities, social support, inclusion, mental wellbeing and overall quality of life.
- **Women's participation in maritime is increasing and requires continued institutional support.** The event highlighted the significant growth in women seafarers and positioned **Sagar Mein Samman** as a continuing effort towards greater inclusion and participation in maritime roles.
- **The overall direction is towards an integrated, seafarer-centric maritime administration.** The central message running through the event was that

security, welfare, regulation, crisis response and technology should work together rather than operate in separate silos.

17. Way Forward

The event has provided a useful platform to bring together the Government, DGMA, industry and the seafaring community, and has helped identify clear areas for further improvement. Going forward, the focus **should be on building on the systems and initiatives already in place** by further strengthening crisis response, improving coordination among DGMA, DGCOC Centre, MEA, Indian Missions, RPSLs, shipowners and other stakeholders, and ensuring timely support to seafarers during emergencies.

The ongoing development of **e-Samudra, e-NAVIK, the Seafarer Tracking Dashboard, LRIT-MMDAC and the RPSL digital module** should be taken forward in a coordinated manner, with stakeholder feedback continuing to guide their improvement. At the welfare level, efforts should focus on making benefits **faster, easier to access and better known** among seafarers and their families through regular outreach and awareness activities. RPSL monitoring and recruitment practices should continue to be strengthened, while concerns raised by stakeholders, including background verification, should be examined as part of the ongoing digital development.

The expansion of **Seafarers' Welfare Clubs, Sagar Mein Samman and Sagar Mein Yog** should further support the wider wellbeing of seafarers. Overall, the event provides a positive foundation for moving towards a **more connected, responsive and seafarer-friendly maritime administration**, with continued stakeholder participation and regular follow-up by the concerned branches of DGMA.

18. CONCLUSION

The interaction held on 8 August 2026 demonstrated the increasing convergence of India's maritime security, safety, welfare and digital governance priorities. The proceedings highlighted that the protection of Indian seafarers must be continuous: beginning with training and employment, extending through life at sea, and remaining responsive during moments of crisis, uncertainty or need.

The event also showed that welfare is evolving beyond individual financial assistance towards a wider ecosystem comprising social security, welfare infrastructure, inclusion, digital access and holistic wellbeing. The inauguration of **e-Samudra** marked an important step in the digital transformation of maritime

administration, while **e-NAVIK**, the **Seafarer Tracking Module**, **LRIT-MMDAC** and the developing RPSL digital architecture showed how technology is being used to improve visibility, responsiveness and accountability.

At the same time, the discussions on **Sagar Mein Samman** and **Sagar Mein Yog** reinforced a broader understanding of maritime capability: a competitive maritime nation requires not only ships, ports and technology, but also a skilled, protected, respected and resilient maritime workforce.

The day's deliberations point towards a future in which security, welfare, digital governance and stakeholder partnership are no longer separate streams of maritime administration. They form **one connected system**. At the centre of that system is the **Indian seafarer**.

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