Maritime News

INDIA-PANAMA CHART NEW MARITIME PARTNERSHIP: EMPHASIS ON LOGISTICS, DIGITAL INNOVATION AND GLOBAL CONNECTIVITY

Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Shri Sarbananda Sonowal held bilateral talks with Panama's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Javier Martínez-Acha Vásquez, to strengthen maritime cooperation between the two countries.

The discussions focused on key areas such as logistics, shipping, maritime security, skill development, and digital transformation, which were identified as the foundation for an expanded strategic partnership.

Shri Sonowal highlighted that India's rapidly growing maritime sector and Panama's position as a leading global logistics hub complement each other well. He noted that closer cooperation could help create more resilient supply chains, improve connectivity, and generate new opportunities for trade, investment, and innovation.

Both leaders reaffirmed the strong maritime relationship between India and Panama, which dates back to 19th century. They also acknowledged the significant contribution of the Indian diaspora in strengthening bilateral ties. Recognizing India's rise as a major ports' nation and Panama's strategic role in global shipping, both sides agreed to enhance collaboration, exchange best practices, and explore new opportunities to boost trade, connectivity, and investment across the Americas.

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GOVERNMENT EXEMPTS IFSC GIFT CITY UNITS FROM COASTAL SHIPPING LICENSING: LANDMARK REFORM TO BOOST INDIA'S MARITIME FINANCE ECOSYSTEM

In a major policy move to strengthen India's maritime services sector and improve its global competitiveness in shipping, the Government of India has exempted units operating in the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) at GIFT City, Gandhinagar, from obtaining a licence under Section 11 of the Coastal Shipping Act, 2025 for chartering foreign vessels used in EXIM (export-import) and international trade. The exemption is expected to make GIFT City a more attractive destination for maritime leasing, ship financing, and ship-owning businesses.

The policy aims to:

- Strengthen GIFT City's position as a global maritime leasing and financing hub.
- Simplify regulatory procedures for businesses involved in international shipping.
- Encourage maritime leasing, ship financing, and ship ownership activities in India.
- Attract greater global investment into maritime assets and infrastructure.
- Support development of a comprehensive maritime ecosystem, including:
  - Ship leasing
  - Maritime financing
  - Asset management
  - Other value-added maritime services

The exemption applies only to the licensing requirement under Section 11 of the Coastal Shipping Act, 2025. It does **not** affect India's existing cabotage regulations or safeguards governing coastal trade. The current framework for coastal shipping remains unchanged, while greater flexibility has been provided for EXIM and international trade operations.

This reform is another step in the Government's broader strategy to establish GIFT City as a world-class international financial and maritime services centre. By easing regulatory requirements and promoting maritime financial services, the initiative is expected to:

- Deepen India's maritime capabilities.
- Boost foreign and domestic investment.
- Enhance India's attractiveness as a global maritime business destination.
- Strengthen the country's role in international shipping and maritime services.

Overall, the measure is expected to create a more business-friendly environment for maritime enterprises while supporting India's ambition to become a leading global maritime hub.

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KAMARAJAR PORT BECOMES INDIA'S SECOND MAJOR PORT WITH 18-METRE DRAFT CAPABILITY: ADVANCING INDIA'S MARITIME COMPETITIVENESS

With the successful completion of its Capital Dredging Phase VI project, Kamarajar Port Limited (KPL) has achieved a significant milestone by establishing itself as a deep-water port, capable of handling Capesize vessels. The port now offers an operational draft of 18.0 metres, enabling it to accommodate vessels carrying cargo loads of up to 1,70,000 DWT. With this enhancement, Kamarajar Port becomes the second major port in India, after Visakhapatnam Port, to provide an 18-metre draft.

Implemented in line with the Government of India's vision of making Kamarajar Port "Cape Compliant," the project

involved deepening the outer approach channel from 20.0 metres to 23.0 metres, the inner entrance channel from 19.0 metres to 22.0 metres, as well as dredging alongside berths, the harbour basin, and associated navigational areas to support an 18-metre draft. The project was completed at an investment of approximately ₹440 crore.

The enhanced draft capability will allow shipping lines to deploy larger vessels, leading to reduced freight costs through economies of scale, improved operational efficiency, and increased cargo-handling capacity. This development is expected to deliver substantial benefits to regional trade, strengthen the port's competitiveness against domestic and international counterparts, and support the growing demands of India's EXIM trade. By attaining Cape Compliant status, Kamarajar Port has joined the ranks of leading international ports equipped for large-scale bulk cargo operations.

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INDIA, EU ADVANCE COOPERATION ON SUSTAINABLE SHIP RECYCLING: THREE INDIAN YARDS READY FOR EU RECOGNITION

India and the European Union have reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation in sustainable ship recycling, with both sides expressing confidence in the progress made towards facilitating the inclusion of Indian ship recycling facilities under the European Union Ship Recycling Regulation (EUSRR).

According to the latest estimates by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), India's share in global ship recycling increased from 30.1% in 2024 to 35.4% in 2025. The country recycled 2.99 million gross tons (GT) of ships in 2025, marking nearly 60% growth compared to 1.86 million GT recycled in 2024.

The listing of Indian ship recycling yards is being facilitated through a transparent process involving audits, inspections and regulatory compliance. Indian facilities have made significant investments in upgrading infrastructure and operational practices to meet international standards, demonstrating the country's commitment to sustainable maritime development and responsible ship recycling.

Highlighting India's long-term vision, **Shri Sarbananda Sonowal** said that the country aims to recycle nearly 16,000 ships over the next decade and has committed USD 8 billion to support the growth of shipbuilding and ship recycling sectors. He added that expanding the number of internationally recognised Indian recycling facilities would make a significant contribution to the global circular economy by promoting environmentally sound recycling practices, generating employment opportunities and strengthening maritime sustainability.

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MARITIME TERMINOLOGY:

1. **Cabotage:** The right to operate sea, air, or other transport services within a particular territory.
2. **Cape Compliant Port:** A "Cape Compliant" port is a harbour with deep enough water to safely receive and handle massive Capesize vessels, which are among the largest dry bulk cargo ships in the world.
3. **Capital dredging:** Capital dredging is the one-time process of removing virgin soil, rock, and sediment from the seabed or riverbed to create new infrastructure or deepen existing water bodies.
4. **Harbour Basin:** Protected water area within a port where vessels manoeuvre and berth.
5. **Gross Tonnage (GT):** Measurement of a ship's internal volume and size.
6. **Deadweight Tonnage (DWT):** Maximum weight a ship can carry, including cargo, fuel, crew, and supplies.