



Session 1 - 'The United Oceans: Strengthening Regional Cooperation for Maritime Security and Sustainable Growth'



19 Feb 26

Session Chair :



Vice Admiral Girish Luthra,
PVSM, AVSM, VSM, ADC (Retd)

Vice Admiral Girish Luthra is a distinguished maritime leader and strategic thinker who served as the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Western and Southern Naval Commands during a career spanning over four decades. A specialist in Navigation and Direction, he commanded frontline warships such as Aircraft Carrier INS Viraat, the Stealth Frigate INS Talwar, and Missile Corvette INS Khukri, before leading the Western Fleet. His extensive Staff experience include Director General of Naval Operations and Deputy Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (Operations). An alumnus of the Defence Service Staff College (India), Naval War College (USA) and recipient of the Param Vishisht Seva Medal. Admiral Luthra transitioned to the private and academic sectors in 2019. Currently, he is visiting Fellow at the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) and Strategic Adviser in Defence, Aerospace, Biotechnology and M&A sectors, contributing his expertise in Maritime Security, Defence Industry, and National and Global dialogues.

Speaker 1 :

Waves of Unity: Collaborative Maritime Security for Safer Indo-Pacific.

Rear Admiral Sean Wat is the Chief of Navy of the Republic of Singapore Navy, with over two decades of distinguished service. Commissioned in 2002, he is a Singapore Armed Forces Overseas Scholar and a graduate of Stanford University, the US Naval War College and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He has commanded frontline warships, served as Fleet Commander and Deputy Commander of Maritime Security Task Force. He also held senior defence policy and force transformation appointments, reflecting strong operational leadership and strategic vision in maritime security and defence governance.



Rear Admiral Sean Wat,
Chief of Navy, Republic of
Singapore Navy

Speaker 2 :

Bridges Over Water : Maritime Diplomacy for Peace and Prosperity in the Indo-Pacific.

Vice Admiral Kunimi Yasuhiro is the Vice Chief of Staff, Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force and a highly experienced Naval Aviation Officer. A graduate of the National Defense Academy and the Maritime Officer Candidate School (JMSDF), he has held a wide range of Operational, Command and Staff appointments across Fleet Air Squadrons, Training Commands and Headquarters. His career includes leadership roles in planning, personnel management, public affairs and air training, reflecting deep expertise in Maritime Air Operations and Strategic Defence Administration.



Vice Admiral Kunimi Yasuhiro,
Vice Chief of Staff, Japan
Maritime Self-Defense Force

Together We Sail : Enhancing Maritime Skills and Inter-Operability in the Indo-Pacific.

Rear Admiral Chris Smith is the Commander of the Australian Fleet. He joined the Royal Australian Navy in 1989 and has served in a wide range of sea and shore appointments across Australia and Overseas. His career includes Command of major warships, leadership of surface forces, and senior staff roles in capability development, personnel management and maritime strategy. He has extensive operational experience in domestic, regional and coalition operations, and is a graduate of premier Australian and international defence and leadership institutions.



Rear Admiral Chris Smith,
AM CSM RAN,
Commander Australian Fleet

Speaker 3 :



Session 2 - 'Tech for Tides: Advancing Maritime Collaboration in a Connected World'



20 Feb 26

Session Chair :



Vice Admiral Sanjay Mahindru,
PVSM, AVSM, NM (Retd)

Vice Admiral Sanjay Mahindru is a distinguished Flag Officer of the Indian Navy with nearly four decades of service, specialising as a Submariner. He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy and King's College London. He was First Commanding Officer of India's First Nuclear Powered Ballistic Missile Submarine, INS Arihant and has commanded INS Shalki, INS Krishna, INS Rajput and Submarine training establishment INS Satavahana. He has held pivotal leadership roles, including Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff, Deputy C-in-C of the Strategic Forces Command, and Flag Officer Submarines. A noted expert in Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) and sea-based nuclear deterrence, he now contributes to national strategic discourse as a member of the Council of the United Service Institution of India (USI) and as an Honorary Distinguished Fellow at National Maritime Foundation (NMF). For his exceptional service and gallantry, he has been honoured with the Param Vishisht Seva Medal, the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal, and the Sena Medal (Gallantry).

Speaker 1 :

Digital Oceans: Integrating AI, IoT and Big Data in Maritime Operations.

Admiral Eduardo Machado Vazquez is the Chief of Naval Operations of the Brazilian Navy. Commissioned in 1987 from the Brazilian Naval Academy, he has held diverse operational, command, and strategic appointments at sea and ashore. His commands include patrol boats, the 2nd Escort Squadron, and the Fleet Training Centre. He has also served as Maritime Task Force Commander, UNIFIL, Chief of Staff to the Commander of the Navy, Commander of the 1st Naval District, and Secretary-General of the Navy. A graduate of the Naval War College and Superior War College, he holds degrees in communications and accounting sciences.



Admiral Eduardo Machado
Vazquez,
Commander of Naval
Operations, Brazil Navy

Speaker 2 :



Rear Admiral Ajit Thekkepat,
DQA (N)

Autonomous Vessels and Robotics in Naval Operations

Rear Admiral Ajit Thekkepat is presently serving as Additional Director General Quality Assurance (Navy). He is an alumnus of the Naval Engineering Course, Defence Services Staff College (Wellington, India) and College of Defence Management (Secunderabad, India). He was commissioned into the Indian Navy in December 1992. A specialist Electrical Officer, he has served onboard frontline ships such as INS Teg, INS Abhay and INS Talwar. He held several key appointments such as Director General at WESEE, General Manager (Refit) at Naval Dockyard (Visakhapatnam), Commodore Personnel at Directorate of Personnel and Joint Director at Directorate of Electrical Engineering at Naval Headquarters. The Admiral also holds an MTech in (Underwater Technology) from IIT Delhi.

Speaker 3 :

Communication Interoperability: Linking Maritime Forces in a Connected World.

Rear Admiral Nirbhay Bapna is presently serving as Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Communication Space Network Centric Operations). He was commissioned into the Indian Navy in July 1991. A specialist in Gunnery and Missile Systems, he is an alumnus of the Naval Academy and the Defence Services Staff College (Wellington, India) where he was awarded the prestigious Lentaigne Medal. He has commanded five frontline warships namely and served as Officer-in-Charge of the International Fleet Review 2016. During his tenure as the Naval Attaché in Washington DC, he served as the Dean of the Corps of Naval Attachés and was instrumental in strengthening Indo-US maritime cooperation. He spearheaded critical initiatives in Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA), ship-repair collaborations, and research on Indo-Pacific deterrence and emerging naval technologies. The Admiral was awarded the Vishisht Seva Medal by the Honorable President of India in 2014 for his distinguished service.



Rear Admiral Nirbhay Bapna,
VSM, ACNS (CSNCO)



Session 3 - 'Safe Seas, Shared Horizons: Advancing Maritime Stability and Cooperation'



20 Feb 26

Session Chair :



Vice Admiral Biswajit Dasgupta, PVSM, AVSM, YSM, VSM (Retd)

Vice Admiral Biswajit Dasgupta is the National Maritime Security Coordinator at the National Security Council Secretariat and has served as Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Eastern Naval Command. An alumnus of the National Defence Academy and the National Defence College, his distinguished 38 years career includes Commanding the Aircraft Carrier INS Viraat, and leading critical operations such as Operation Raahat in Yemen. He was head of naval operations in the Western Naval Command, Mumbai and commanded the Eastern Fleet at Visakhapatnam. A recipient of four presidential awards for his contribution to Naval Strategy and Maritime Affairs, he has held apex leadership roles as Controller of Personnel Services at Naval Headquarters and as Chief of Staff Eastern Naval Command. He is a regular speaker at military colleges, academic institutions, conferences and dialogues. Currently, he provides apex level guidance to integrate and coordinate maritime security efforts across India's multifarious stakeholders as National Maritime Security Coordinator.

Speaker 1 :

Freedom of Navigation and Rules Based Maritime Order.

Rear Admiral Richard N Gonzaga is the Commander of Northern Luzon Naval Command of the Philippine Navy, a senior Flag Officer and Deputy Commander, APF Education and Training Command. A graduate of the Philippine Military Academy 'Tanglaw Diwa' Class of 1992, he has commanded many warships, held key staff and inspectorate appointments and also served as the Director of the Training and Doctrine Centre. His career reflects operational excellence, strategic leadership and distinguished service in maritime security and Naval administration.



Rear Admiral Richard N Gonzaga, Philippine Navy

Speaker 2 :



Rear Admiral Rahul Shankar, NM, Flag Officer Offshore Defence Advisory Group and Advisor to the GOVT of India (FODAG)

Information Sharing and Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA).

Rear Admiral Rahul Shankar is presently heading the Headquarter Offshore Defence Advisory Group at Mumbai. The Officer was commissioned into the Indian Navy in July 1992, is a Navigation and Direction specialist with extensive command, operational, training, and staff experience. He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Khadakvasla, the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, the College of Defence Management, Secunderabad, and the Royal College of Defence Studies, UK. He has led key Naval appointments such as Commanding Officer of Mauritian Coast Guard Ship 'Guardian', INS Taragiri and INS Satpura, Commodore Operations, Eastern Naval Command, Commodore Personnel, Naval Headquarters and head of the Indian Navy's Communication, Space and Network Centric Operations division at Naval Headquarters. The Admiral is a recipient of the Nao Sena Medal for devotion to duty.

Speaker 3 :

Combating Non-Traditional Maritime Threats.

Comde Timoci Natuva is presently Commodore of the Naval Division of Republic of Fiji Military Forces. Commissioned in 2001, he is a graduate of the Royal New Zealand Navy Officers Training School. He has held numerous sea and shore appointments including Maritime Commander, Support Commander, Fleet Operations Officer, and Chief of Staff for the Naval Division. A Navigation Specialist, he has extensive experience in Constabulary Operations, Maritime Security and HADR Operations. He has a strong record of International Service, including UN assignments in Iraq and Golan Heights. He holds a Master's Degree in Military and Defence Studies from Australian University and a Master's Degree in National Security and Strategic Studies from Deakin University. His awards include the UN Medal, the Meritorious Service Decoration, The Fiji 50th Anniversary Medal, and the General Service Medal.



Commodore Timoci Natuva, Comde Naval Division, Fiji



Session 4 - 'Ocean of Care: Maritime Cooperation for Humanitarian Support'



20 Feb 26

Session Chair :



Vice Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd)

Vice Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar is a highly accomplished Flag Officer of the Indian Navy who superannuated on 31 Oct 25 after a distinguished career spanning nearly four decades. An Anti-Submarine Warfare specialist and alumnus of the National Defence Academy and the U.S. Naval War College, he commanded frontline warships, the Aircraft Carrier INS Viraat, Stealth Frigate INS Shivalik, and the Missile Corvette INS Kora. His senior leadership roles included the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command, Director General Naval Operation, Deputy Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (Operations), Flag Officer Commanding Maharashtra Area and Flag Officer Sea Training. A recipient of the Param Vishisht Seva Medal, he is widely recognised for his strategic contribution to National Security, including pioneering role in conceptualising the National Maritime Domain Awareness (NMDA) project to enhance India's maritime security capabilities

Speaker 1 :

Maritime Forces as First Responders: Evolving Roles in HADR Operations.

Rear Admiral Garin Golding is the Chief of Navy, New Zealand. He assumed office in August 2024 after a distinguished career in the Royal New Zealand Navy. A specialist in mine warfare and clearance diving, he has Commanded HMNZS Manawanui and held senior joint and maritime capability appointments. His operational experience includes deployments to Bougainville and East Timor. A graduate of New Zealand, Australian and UK institutions, he holds advanced degrees in International Security and Strategic Studies and is a recipient of multiple National and International commendations.



Rear Admiral Garin Golding, Chief of Navy, New Zealand

Speaker 2 :

Building Regional HADR Capacity: Training, Co-Ordination and Resource Sharing.

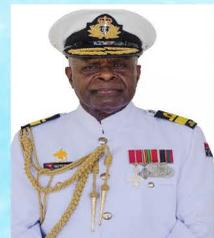
Rear Admiral Abdulhamid Baba - Inna is the Navy Secretary of the Nigerian Navy. Commissioned in 1995 and promoted to Rear Admiral in August 2022. A graduate of the Nigerian Defence Academy, he holds degrees on Geography, Security and Strategic Studies. His illustrious career spans key Command, instructional staff and diplomatic appointments, including Commanding Officer NNS OLOGBO, Chief Instructor Naval Wing - Nigerian Defence Academy, Deputy Defence Attaché in Cairo, and senior policy, admiralty, logistics, and operations roles at Naval and Defence Headquarters.



Rear Admiral Abdul Hamid Baba-Inna, Secretary Navy, Nigerian Navy

Climate Induced Disasters: Maritime Strategies for Response and Resilience.

Rear Admiral Philip Polewara is the Chief of Defence of the Papua New Guinea Defence Forces. He has extensive Operational, Command and strategic experience. Commissioned in the 1980s, he has served across Naval Aviation, Patrol Craft and Joint Operations, including active service in Bougainville. He has commanded key PNGDF Naval units and held senior appointments such as Chief of Training, Chief of Staff and Deputy Chief of Defense Force. An alumnus of prestigious Australian, US and International defence institutions, he brings deep expertise in maritime security, leadership and defence administration.



Rear Admiral Philip Polewara, DMS, CBE, Chief of Defence, Papua New Guinea

Speaker 3 :