

Speech of Shri Nitin Gadkari at the International Maritime Organization in London today

India puts forward her candidature for a re-election to the Council of IMO in Category-B

Mr President, Secretary General, Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate the new President and his team on their election yesterday. It is indeed an honour and privilege to stand here today to share with this distinguished audience regarding our maritime heritage and the initiatives taken by our Government in the maritime sphere.

India's ancient trade and cultural ties with Mesopotamia, Mediterranean rim countries; South East Asia, China, Middle East and Africa are testimonial to our rich maritime heritage. India has a large coastline of 7500 Kms., inland waterways of 20,000 Kms., over 200 major and minor ports and increasing ship building, ship repair and ship recycling facilities.

India is also strategically located in the corridor through which substantial part of the east-west seaborne traffic flows. India has about one thousand four hundred vessels with Gross Tonnage of about 12.2 million. In addition, India has a large number of inland and near-coastal vessels. Nearly 90% of India's overseas trade by volume is carried through ships of which 92% is carried by foreign flag vessels.

With the Indian economy poised to grow faster, our Government is alive to the possibility of a quantum jump in the maritime activities on the Indian Coasts. We are upgrading our infrastructure and reforming the regulatory framework for ease of doing business. SAGARMALA, our flagship programme launched in 2015 for port led development, has four limbs, namely, port modernization and new port development; port connectivity; port led industrialization; and port community development. Under this programme, 6 new major ports, 150 projects to modernize existing ports including construction of new berths, and 130 projects in rail & road sectors for last mile connectivity have been identified requiring investment of \$100 BILLION by 2025, of which, about 40 BILLION dollars already stands spent. 111 inland waterways fit for river navigation have been identified, of which 32 will be developed in the first phase at an estimated investment of \$800 million. These projects provide major investment opportunities for the International Community.

Distinguished delegates, India has benefitted immensely from the free and frank deliberations and exchange of ideas in IMO. As we expand our maritime activities, the guidance of IMO will become even more valuable. India has been one of the founder members of IMO and has been part of the IMO Council since then, except in 1983-84. In Category B of the Council, India represents the developing world and the nations with the largest share in international sea borne trade.

Dr.C.P. Srivastava, IMO's longest serving Secretary General from 1974 to 1989 remains the most important face of India's commitment to the IMO's activities. His contribution in establishing World Maritime University, Sweden, International Maritime Academy, Italy, and International Maritime Law Institute, Malta will always be remembered.

The world's premier ship recycling facility is located at Alang Sosiya, in Gujarat, where nearly half of the world's scrapped ships are recycled. To make ship recycling industry safe for its workers and the surrounding environment, a draft legislation to implement the Hong Kong Convention is now undergoing pre-legislative consultations and I am confident that we would ratify this convention in not so distant future.

India has more than Four Hundred Thousand seafarers who are the preferred choice for specialized vessels. India provides the services of its expert manpower for Member State Audit Scheme, Goal Based Standards (GBS), and Working Groups etc. Capt. Radhika Menon, from India became the first woman in the world to receive IMO's Award for Exceptional Bravery, 2016.

Distinguished delegates,

India is a key player in the space technology with the distinction of launching into orbit a record breaking 104 nano satellites, from a single rocket on 14th Feb, 2017. I am happy to note, that application of "Indian Regional Navigational Satellite System or IRNSS" in the maritime field is being pursued in IMO. I am sure, the maritime community will benefit with the induction of this additional new facility. India became the largest contributor to IOPC Funds this year, and has accepted the position of Vice Chair of the Executive Committee of the IOPC Funds and is in its Joint Audit Body.

The Maritime India Summit, 2016 was attended by 5000 delegates from 42 countries. India has signed agreements on Maritime Transport with 27 countries and many more will follow. India remains an observer member of the Arctic Council.

The Indian Naval ships and aircrafts continue to escort merchant ships of all nations in the Gulf of Aden. Even though there have been no successful hijackings of commercial vessels since May 2012, in the waters east of 65 degrees longitude, India continues to participate in all global forum to eradicate piracy in the Somalia region. India has been elected as a Co-chair for Working Group 1 of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS).

India has an efficient and vigilant Search and Rescue (SAR) set-up and has made commendable efforts to rescue seafarers in distress situations in the Indian SAR area, covering the Indian Ocean, Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. The launch of IRNSS will further strengthen our SAR efforts.

Distinguished delegates,

India is committed to contribute to various efforts & initiatives of the IMO for a safe, efficient, clean and secure maritime transportation for the benefit of mankind. India is hereby putting forward her candidature for a re-election to the Council of the IMO in Category-B representing the developing countries and countries with the largest interests in international sea borne trade. In the event of India being re-elected, it would rededicate herself, with renewed commitment towards the development of the objectives of IMO, and leverage the opportunity to further strengthen the implementation of the IMO instruments, for the accelerated & sustained growth of the global maritime community.

Thank you.

NP/
(Release ID :173933)