

CLAWS Newsletter



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by Yuvvraj Singh



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* Indian Ocean Tracker, a segment of the CLAWS Newsletters, offers a concise overview of key developments in the Indian Ocean Region, blending sharp analysis with expert insights.

SRI LANKA

1. Cyclone Ditwah to delay Sri Lanka's fragile recovery, worsen poverty ([Reuters](#))

Cyclone Ditwah's devastating strike on Sri Lanka in late November has significantly set back the country's fragile economic recovery by destroying homes, infrastructure and key rice and tea crops, driving up reconstruction costs to an estimated \$7 billion and threatening to push more families into poverty after rates had already surged in recent years; the disaster, the deadliest since the 2004 tsunami, inundated about 20 % of the country, affected millions of people, and is expected to slow economic growth and increase the need for external financial support as officials and analysts warn of prolonged hardship and heightened vulnerability.

2. India has launched Operation Sagar Bandhu to assist Sri Lanka in disaster relief and recovery ([Times of India](#))

India launched Operation Sagar Bandhu to provide extensive humanitarian and disaster-relief support, airlifting tens of tonnes of aid, medical teams and equipment, and sending para-medical personnel and a para field hospital; Indian helicopters evacuated hundreds of people and delivered relief supplies, while Indian Army engineers are working with Sri Lankan authorities to restore road connectivity and rebuild damaged infrastructure, and the Indian Navy has deployed multiple ships carrying relief materials and carried out aerial reconnaissance to assist search, rescue and recovery efforts.

3. Climate change intensified the rainfall and flooding across Sri Lanka, confirmed by the Climate attribution study. ([World Weather Attribution](#))

The study finds that climate change driven by human-caused warming has significantly increased the intensity of heavy rainfall and extreme flood heights across Sri Lanka and the Malacca Strait region, making destructive flooding more frequent and more severe in densely populated coastal and riverine areas. Warmer air and oceans are holding more moisture, leading to short-duration but very intense rainfall events that overwhelm drainage systems, rivers and urban infrastructure, while sea-level rise worsens flood impacts in low-lying coastal zones. The report warns that without rapid emissions reductions and major investments in flood-resilient infrastructure, early-warning systems and land-use planning, such climate-amplified disasters will increasingly threaten lives, livelihoods, food security and economic stability across South and Southeast Asia.

4. Sri Lanka Government drafts climate-resilient reconstruction roadmap, integrating disaster financing and adaptation funding. ([Govt of Sri Lanka](#))

The Sri Lankan government has drafted a climate-resilient reconstruction roadmap aimed at rebuilding disaster-affected areas while reducing long-term vulnerability to climate shocks by integrating adaptation measures into national development planning. The framework seeks to align post-disaster reconstruction

with climate resilience standards, strengthen coordination between ministries, and mobilise a mix of domestic resources, international climate finance, insurance mechanisms and disaster-risk financing instruments. By linking recovery spending with adaptation funding, the roadmap aims to ensure that infrastructure, livelihoods and public services rebuilt after disasters are more resilient, fiscally sustainable and better prepared for increasingly frequent extreme weather events.

MALDIVES

1. Maldives introduces Death Penalty for Drug Smuggling ([Maldives Independent](#))

The Maldives has amended its Drugs Act to introduce the death penalty for certain drug trafficking offences, with President Mohamed Muizzu ratifying the changes that Parliament passed. Under the new law, offenders trafficking specified quantities of Schedule 1 drugs, such as large amounts of cannabis, heroin and other hard drugs, can face the death penalty, subject to review by higher courts and unanimous approval from a full Supreme Court bench. The reforms also create new drug-related offences, expand law enforcement powers, tighten asset seizure rules, enhance the treatment framework for addiction, and remove eligibility for clemency or parole for those facing life imprisonment or death sentences.

2. Joint Military Drill Between India and Maldives Underway ([Times of India](#))

India and the Maldives conducted a joint military exercise involving the Indian Army and the Maldives National Defence Force to enhance interoperability, coordination and preparedness for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations. The drill focused on joint planning, search and rescue, medical response, evacuation procedures and coordination during natural disasters, reflecting the shared vulnerability of both countries to climate-related emergencies in the Indian Ocean region. The exercise underscored the growing defence cooperation between the two partners and highlighted India's role as a first responder and net security provider in the region, while strengthening operational familiarity and trust between the two forces.

REST OF THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION

1. Heightened Piracy in the Somali Basin ([Skuld](#))

Shipping companies are maintaining heightened security postures across the western Indian Ocean and Somali Basin as pirate activity has resurged since late October, re-emerging through November–December as a major operational risk for commercial vessels. Industry advisories indicate that armed guards, naval escorts, increased watchkeeping, speed and routing adjustments, and stricter incident reporting protocols remain in force for many transits, reflecting concerns over crew safety and cargo security. The renewed threat has reinforced coordination between navies, shipping firms and maritime

security centres, underscoring that Somali piracy is once again a key factor shaping risk assessments and operational planning in the region.

2. Reports show intensifying IS-linked insurgent attacks in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique ([AP News](#))

Northern Mozambique is facing a deepening humanitarian and security crisis as IS-linked insurgents intensify attacks in Cabo Delgado, triggering fresh waves of displacement and extending violence into neighbouring provinces. The renewed assaults have targeted civilians and infrastructure, overwhelming already fragile local capacities and sharply increasing humanitarian needs for food, shelter and protection. The spillover of violence is also straining regional security cooperation, with neighbouring states and regional forces under pressure to contain the insurgency while balancing counterterrorism operations with humanitarian access and civilian protection.

3. Ocean Technology Symposium (Sympol 2025) launched in Kochi ([Times of India](#))

The Ocean Technology International Symposium (Sympol 2025) was launched in Kochi, bringing together global experts to discuss advances in maritime technology, including underwater sensing, autonomous systems, maritime domain awareness and security applications. The event highlighted how Indian Ocean Region states are increasingly investing in advanced ocean science and defence technologies to strengthen surveillance, situational awareness and strategic readiness amid growing maritime competition.

4. Amidst Putin's Visit to Delhi, India–Russia Deepen Indian Ocean Connectivity Through Strategic Multimodal Trade Corridors ([Economic Times](#))

At the India–Russia trade forum held in early December, officials from both sides underscored the growing role of multimodal connectivity projects in strengthening bilateral economic and strategic ties, with particular emphasis on the proposed Vladivostok–Chennai maritime and land corridor. The initiative is envisioned as a game-changer for trade flows by substantially reducing transit time between the Russian Far East and India while creating a more reliable logistics route that leverages Indian Ocean shipping lanes. Beyond commercial benefits, the corridor is expected to enhance supply-chain resilience, facilitate energy, mineral and industrial trade, and integrate Russia more deeply into Indo-Pacific maritime networks. The discussions also highlighted how such connectivity projects reinforce the Indian Ocean's importance as a conduit for Eurasian trade and reflect a broader convergence of Indian and Russian interests in diversifying transport routes amid shifting global economic and geopolitical dynamics.

5. India Advances Strategic Deep Ocean Mission in the Central Indian Ocean Basin ([PIB](#))

India has stepped up its Deep Ocean Mission by intensifying exploration activities in the 75,000 sq. km area allocated to it by the International Seabed Authority in the Central Indian Ocean Basin. The designated zone has been systematically and uniformly sampled for polymetallic nodules at 12.5 km intervals to assess their abundance and mineral quality. Alongside resource assessment, India is generating baseline data on marine environmental characteristics while simultaneously developing deep-sea mining technologies and metallurgical processes, underscoring a long-term strategy that links scientific research, resource security and technological self-reliance in the Indian Ocean.



About the Author

Yuvvraj Singh is a Research Assistant at Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), focusing his research on the USA and its implications on the Global South. He holds a Master's and Bachelor's in Political Science (with specialisation in International Relations) from Kirori Mal College, Delhi University. He has previously worked at ORF, NITI Aayog, and Ministry of External Affairs (ICWA), researching on a range of topics concerning the Global South, Conflict, Maritime Security, and Sustainability. His research has also been published at several national and international fora like The Diplomat, RT, Indian Council of World Affairs, among others. He can be reached at yuvvraj.claws@gmail.com.



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