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Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways
Government of India

INDIA MARITIME WEEK 2025

Chintan Research Foundation

EVENT REPORT

# TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIVITY

## Shaping Future Strategic Ties

29 October 2025, Bombay Exhibition Center, Goregaon, Mumbai

## ABOUT CHINTAN RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Chintan Research Foundation (CRF) is an emerging independent think tank dedicated to shaping policy through rigorous research and thought leadership. With a strong focus on fostering collaboration between policymakers and industry, CRF integrates practical insights into its research and advocacy efforts. It conducts comprehensive research to support informed decision-making and engages with stakeholders through discussions, events, and publications. CRF's research is focused on three core areas – Climate Change & Energy Transition, Economy & Trade, and Geopolitics & Strategic Studies. The Centre for Climate Change & Energy Transition aims to be a research and expertise hub, focusing on sustainable and clean energy, environmental stewardship, and climate actions.

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EVENT REPORT

# TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIVITY: SHAPING THE FUTURE STRATEGIC TIES

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## CONTENTS

## WELCOME ADDRESS

Shri Shishir Priyadarshi
President, CRF

Welcoming the panellists and audience, Shri Shishir Priyadarshi noted that transnational economic corridors have emerged as the arteries of global supply chains. The India–Middle East–Europe Corridor (IMEC) and the Eastern Maritime Corridor (EMC) are not just infrastructure projects; they embody a vision of inclusive, resilient, and equitable global connectivity.

For India, these corridors occupy a position of strategic importance. They directly strengthen India's global connectivity, energy security, and industrial competitiveness, while also positioning India as a central hub in global supply chains. Today, India stands at the confluence of two transformative corridors – one linking West Asia and Europe, the other harnessing the vast maritime potential of the Indian Ocean region.

These corridors are central to India's maritime future under Maritime India Vision 2030 (MIV 2030) and Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 (MAKV 2047) as they directly advance India's ambitions of becoming a global maritime hub, diversifying trade and trade routes, and securing energy flows. Through investments in shipbuilding, port modernisation, digital infrastructure, and green technologies, India is no longer merely taking part in global trade but actively shaping the future architecture of global connectivity. The corridors promise to reduce transit times, slash logistics costs, and create prosperity for hundreds of millions across three continents, whilst simultaneously positioning India as the world's maritime powerhouse and a beacon of sustainable development.

He also stressed that success demands unwavering commitment from all stakeholders – consistent political will, sufficient financial investment, regulatory harmonisation, and regional stability. He stated that on this transformative journey, India commits fully to building these corridors – as platforms for shared prosperity, mutual respect, and a more balanced global order in which all nations can thrive.

## SPECIAL ADDRESS

Shri Shantanu Thakur
Minister of State, PSW

Shri Shantanu Thakur, while appreciating CRF's timely hosting of the session as part of India Maritime Week, Government of India, highlighted the significance of transnational connectivity, noting that it is the seas and oceans that bind geographies together. He underlined the growing importance of initiatives such as IMEC and EMC in shaping global trade and cooperation and invoked the timeless maxim: 'Who rules the seas, rules the world'.

He emphasised that under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Modi, India is steadily enhancing its maritime strength in the 21st century, recognising the central role of maritime routes in trans-global trade, connectivity, and sustainable growth. Connectivity initiatives such as IMEC and the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC) strengthen India's engagement with West Asia, Africa, Europe, and beyond, complementing other transport connectivity frameworks such as the EU Global Gateway and the G7 Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment. The EMC and IMEC together underscore a vision of inclusive, future-oriented connectivity that supports economic integration and shared prosperity.

Shri Shantanu also stressed that for India, these corridors are not only vital for regional cooperation but also for realising the Vision 2047 goal of becoming a developed, globally connected nation. Both land and maritime corridors will play a pivotal role in ensuring that India remains a diversified, reliable, and strategic partner in global supply chains. He emphasised that such initiatives are therefore crucial for promoting inclusive, sustainable, and forward-looking dialogue on global connectivity, benefiting not only India but the entire international community.

India is a natural leader and convenor of inclusive, future-oriented conversations on connectivity corridors, where solutions are grounded in cooperative action across geographies and sectors. Such corridors function not only as trade routes but also as comprehensive frameworks of connectivity, driving economic dynamism, digital integration, and climate-aligned growth. For India, which is working towards its vision of Viksit Bharat @2047, land and maritime connectivity corridors across continents serve as key catalysts.

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Mr Edoardo Rixi
Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Transport, Italy

Mr Edoardo Rixi thanked PM Modi for hosting the International Maritime Week (IMW), calling it a timely and essential platform for advancing dialogue on transnational connectivity and maritime cooperation. He noted that rising geopolitical tensions have increasingly constrained the ease of global connectivity, underscoring the need to enhance links between the economies of Northern Europe and the broader Indo-Pacific region, which are becoming central to global trade and supply chain stability.

Speaking from an Italian perspective, he highlighted that Italy has approximately 15 national and international ports, placing the country as a major maritime hub. Over the next decade, Italy aspires to become Europe's leading nation in terms of logistical efficiency, capitalising on its strategic location. Further, he said that the ongoing tensions in the Red Sea are likely to divert and increase maritime traffic through Italian seas, further enhancing Italy's strategic relevance in global trade networks.

He identified three priority areas for the future: the necessity of moving beyond national approaches in favour of a shared global perspective; the risk that mechanisms such as the emission trading scheme could jeopardise the global trading environment by imposing disproportionate burdens on certain nations unless implemented equitably; and the imperative for countries to embrace technological advancements to remain competitive and efficient within the evolving logistics and maritime ecosystem.

Furthermore, Mr Rixi emphasised the importance of initiatives such as the IMEC and similar transnational connectivity projects. He concluded that India serves as a natural gateway to the Asian market, just as Italy functions as the gateway for India into the European market, making cooperation between the two nations crucial for strengthening regional and global connectivity.

# SESSION 1 | TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIVITY – THE NEW CURRENCY OF GEOPOLITICAL CONVERGENCE AND GEO-ECONOMIC ALIGNMENT

## MODERATOR

**VICE-ADMIRAL (RETD.) BISWAJIT DASGUPTA**
National Maritime Security Coordinator, NSCS

## PANELISTS

**H.E. AMB. LAZAR COMANESCU**
Secretary-General, Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization

**ALGIS LATAKAS**
DG - Port of Klaipėda, Lithuania

**SANJAY SWARUP**
Chairman and Managing Director, Container Corporation of India (CONCOR), New Delhi

**DEEPAK SHETTY**
Former Secretary to the GoI and Director General of Shipping, Ministry of Shipping

**PRANAV CHOUDHARY**
CEO, Adani Ports and SEZ (APSEZ), Gujarat

Transnational connectivity has long driven global progress. From the ancient Silk Routes, which facilitated the exchange not only of silk and spices but also of ideas, technologies, and cultures, to the modern Suez Canal, which shortens the Europe-Asia maritime route by thousands of kilometres and carries over 12 per cent of global trade, connectivity has continuously shaped economic development. Today, this legacy is being reimagined through multimodal initiatives such as IMEC and EMC and other emerging connectivity frameworks, which aim to create faster, greener, and more efficient trade corridors. Transport corridors are thus central to a broader global narrative, where meaningful economic progress is inherently collective rather than confined within national borders. This is particularly evident in an era marked by supply chain disruptions such as the ongoing Red Sea crisis (during and after the Israel–Gaza conflict post-2023), which highlights the urgent need for diversified, resilient, and inclusive trade routes.

IMEC is a multimodal project connecting various ports, railways, highways, digital networks, and energy grids, linking India with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, and Europe via countries such as Greece, Italy, and France. Although the operational potential of this transformative project is yet to be realised, it is widely considered one of the major projects unlocking regional prosperity through connectivity.

Complementing this, the EMC, particularly through the Chennai–Vladivostok Sea Route, marks a significant step in strengthening India's maritime outreach towards the Indo-Pacific region. By creating a direct maritime link between India and Russia's Far East, the EMC reduces travel distance and time compared to traditional routes through Europe. Beyond trade, the corridor holds strategic importance in enhancing connectivity with key maritime zones in the Indo-Pacific, such as the Sea of Japan and the South China Sea. It also opens new opportunities for energy cooperation, especially in accessing Russian resources, while boosting the development of India's eastern ports. Overall, the EMC complements broader connectivity initiatives by expanding India's role in regional trade networks and reinforcing its maritime presence in the Indo-Pacific.

Globalisation is set to deepen in the digital era, where AI-enabled single-window clearance and blockchain-tracked cargo will seamlessly bind hinterlands to high seas, turning physical corridors into data-driven networks that reduce transit times and expand market reach. Trade corridors must be viewed through the lens of expanding and strengthening interconnected networks. Moreover, transnational projects provide impetus to shared infrastructure such as ports, railways, pipelines, and data cables, enabling economies of scale that maximise trade opportunities, particularly for landlocked regions and small-to-medium-sized enterprises in developing nations.

The success and long-term viability of connectivity corridors depend on several key factors. These include clear and stable policies that build predictability and investor confidence; a well-defined, time-bound framework backed by strong administrative support; and a fast, efficient, and affordable dispute resolution mechanism. Additionally, a single-window system for data exchange is essential to streamline the movement of goods and improve the ease of doing business. Finally, adopting digital architecture and technology-driven platforms such as artificial intelligence and other modern tools can help address operational challenges and enhance overall efficiency.

However, it is also significant to note that past experiences demonstrate that not all connectivity initiatives have delivered sustainable outcomes. Large-scale infrastructure efforts can generate rapid economic gains, but they also raise critical concerns regarding financial sustainability, governance, and strategic balance. It is within this context that China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) must be understood. While the BRI has accelerated infrastructure development, job creation, and GDP growth across participating countries, growing distrust among recipient nations and rising debt burdens have led to concerns about 'debt-trap' scenarios. In several instances, countries have struggled to service loans, risking the loss of strategic economic assets and thereby undermining the initiative's original development objectives. Additionally, the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship component of the BRI, has faced significant challenges, including security threats and repeated attacks on Chinese personnel, which have hindered progress and exposed vulnerabilities in large transnational projects.

Beyond physical trade, the exchange of knowledge and experience represents the next frontier of connectivity. Through joint research in green shipping technologies, shared best practices in port management, and collaborative training programmes, countries can develop smarter, more sustainable, and resilient maritime ecosystems that benefit all participants in an interconnected world.

Looking ahead, the future of global connectivity lies in multimodal transport systems that seamlessly integrate land, maritime, and digital infrastructure. Achieving this vision will require sustained political alignment, reliable long-term financing, robust digital architectures, and harmonised legal and regulatory frameworks to enable the frictionless movement of goods and services. Recognising and learning from both the successes and shortcomings of past and existing initiatives remains crucial. Policymakers must carefully internalise these lessons to shape the next generation of connectivity corridors – ones that are resilient, transparent, inclusive, and genuinely sustainable.

# SESSION 2 | IMEC AND EMC – THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL CONNECTIVITY

## MODERATOR

**DEEPAK SHETTY**
Former Secretary to the GoI
and Director General of Shipping,
Ministry of Shipping

## PANELISTS

**SHYAM JAGANNATHAN**
IAS, Director Generalof Shipping
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to the GoI, Mumbai

**ROMESH DAVID**
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South Asia Gateway Terminals

**S. RAMAKRISHNAN**
Executive Chairman,
Transworld Group of Companies
(Shipping & Logistics), Dubai

**ANIL DEVLI**
CEO, INSA (Indian National
Shipowners Association),
Mumbai

**SUNIL VASWANI**
Executive Director, CSLA
(Container Shipping Lines Association),
Mumbai

The IMEC was announced on the sidelines of India's G20 Summit in New Delhi, India, in 2023. The primary objective of this ambitious multinational and multimodal economic corridor is to build a modern and efficient transportation route connecting India to Europe via West Asia through rail and sea routes. The project aims to enhance trade connectivity and promote economic cooperation among participating countries. It will also contribute to the economic diversification of the Gulf countries, reduce dependence on existing chokepoints (such as the Suez Canal), improve supply chain resilience, open new markets, foster greater economic integration, enhance energy security, support green transition efforts, and boost digital connectivity.

The three fundamental pillars of the transnational initiative – transportation connectivity, energy infrastructure, and digital infrastructure – all work in tandem to drive greater integration amongst the member countries. By enhancing transportation networks, IMEC reduces transit times from Asia to Europe by 40 per cent. In the energy domain, the corridor promotes interconnected energy systems and cross-continental energy infrastructure. In the digital sphere, the project includes the deployment of new fibre-optic cables and cross-border digital infrastructure to provide faster data transfer, improved physical connections, and increased digital and technological cooperation throughout the corridor.

Leveraging India's expanding manufacturing base, strategic geographic location, and strong diplomatic relations is increasingly important in the evolving global trade and connectivity landscape. This vision is reflected in initiatives such as MIV 2030 and MAKV 2047. These frameworks recognise that transnational connectivity projects such as IMEC and INSTC function not merely as infrastructure ventures but as long-term instruments for economic transformation, strengthening strategic autonomy, and positioning India as a key global player in areas such as shipbuilding, ship repair, maritime investments, and the transition to greener shipping practices.

Furthermore, the IMEC initiative has garnered robust backing from key stakeholders, particularly the United States, which views it as a strategic initiative for advancing global infrastructure development and promoting economic cooperation among partner nations. The project offers a

significant leap forward in global connectivity, with the potential to reshape international trade routes and strengthen global supply chain integration. While connections between India and the UAE have shown encouraging momentum through strengthened bilateral cooperation and the establishment of virtual trade corridors, the overall progress remains partially realised due to significant roadblocks, particularly following the Israel–Hamas war, which has complicated regional coordination and project timelines.

Conversely, the EMC, or Chennai–Vladivostok Sea Route, complements India's maritime vision by strengthening eastern maritime linkages. It enables southern Indian ports to connect with key maritime regions such as the Sea of Japan, East China Sea, South China Sea, Malacca Strait, Andaman Sea, and Bay of Bengal. This not only enhances port capacity along India's eastern coast but also establishes critical routes for expanding trade and energy cooperation.

A critical enabler for India's success in leveraging these corridors requires the development of a strong national maritime fleet. India-flagged vessels are essential not only for supporting IMEC and EMC initiatives but also for meeting India's domestic and international cargo requirements. Building a robust Indian shipping industry through increased investments in shipbuilding, fleet diversification, and long-term cargo management contracts will ensure stability and economic viability in maritime operations. Additionally, strengthening India's port infrastructure and minimising multiple cargo handling processes will reduce costs and improve turnaround efficiency, while green shipping initiatives and sustainable maritime development will position India as a leader in the blue economy and environmental responsibility.

The success of these transnational corridors depends fundamentally on harmonised regulatory frameworks, streamlined customs procedures, and synchronised infrastructure development across all participating nations. The integration of AI-enabled single-window clearance systems and blockchain-tracked cargo management will transform these physical corridors into seamless, data-driven networks that significantly reduce transit times and expand market reach. As India continues to position itself as a central player in IMEC development, leveraging its growing manufacturing capabilities, strategic location, and diplomatic partnerships, the nation is emerging as a hub in the evolving global trade and connectivity framework. The corridors are not merely economic initiatives but also strategic instruments for enhancing regional stability, fostering collaboration, and promoting economic diversification in a multipolar world order.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Overcoming Geopolitical Hurdles and Sustaining Political and Financial Commitment for IMEC:** IMEC remains largely a conceptual vision and faces several challenges to becoming operational. Its success will depend on overcoming geopolitical tensions and maintaining regional stability, both of which are crucial for the project's advancement. Given the significant financial investments required, along with the need for high-quality infrastructure to achieve reduced transit times, strong coordination among participating countries is essential – particularly to align regulations, customs processes, and infrastructure development. Additionally, sustained political will and long-term financial commitment from all stakeholders will prove critical to ensuring the corridor's successful implementation.

- **Ensuring Policy Certainty for Connectivity Corridors:** Stable policies and time-bound frameworks encourage investments in large-scale infrastructure projects. The INSTC offers an example of how progress has been hindered by a lack of a cohesive administrative structure, inadequate institutional funding, and the absence of consistent political commitment among member nations. Policymakers must integrate these valuable lessons from existing initiatives into future strategies to ensure the creation of resilient and sustainable connectivity corridors.

- **Efficient and Time-Bound Dispute Settlement Mechanisms:** An efficient, speedy, and cost-effective dispute settlement body is essential for the credibility and stability of any international connectivity corridor. A time-bound framework for resolving trade and transit disputes must be established to provide assurance to participating nations and stakeholders.

- **Multimodal Integration, Digital Architecture, and Single-Window Systems:** The future of global connectivity lies in multimodal transport systems that integrate land, sea, and digital infrastructure. Achieving this vision requires countries to align political will, secure adequate funding, establish robust digital architectures, and harmonise national laws to enable the seamless movement of goods and services. A single-window system for data interchange is needed to enable smoother movement of goods and greater ease of doing business. The adoption of e-architecture and technology-driven platforms, leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) and other modern tools, is critical for overcoming operational bottlenecks and logistical challenges

- **Strengthening Rail Connectivity Agreements:** Geopolitical factors often lead to disruptions and strain in global supply chains, underscoring the need for alternative and resilient connectivity options. In this context, the vital role of railways in ensuring continuity and diversification of trade routes must be recognised. Strengthening rail connectivity agreements and developing a robust container interchange protocol are essential to facilitate smoother trade operations. While progress has been made, certain challenges persist in India's connectivity arrangements with Pakistan and Bangladesh, which require focused diplomatic and infrastructural efforts to resolve.

- **Ensuring Equitable Trade Frameworks:** There is a need to avoid narrow national approaches and instead work towards a shared perspective. Mechanisms such as the emission trading scheme [SR1.1] could jeopardise the global trading environment, creating unfair disadvantages for certain nations if

not applied equitably. Countries involved in the corridors must embrace technological advancements to remain competitive and efficient within the evolving logistics and maritime ecosystem.

- **Integrating IMEC and EMC with Complementary Transport Connectivity Frameworks:** Connectivity initiatives such as IMEC and INSTC strengthen India's engagement with West Asia, Africa, Europe, and beyond, complementing transport connectivity frameworks such as the EU Global Gateway and the G7 Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment. The Eastern Maritime Corridor and IMEC together underscore the vision of inclusive, future-oriented connectivity that supports economic integration and shared prosperity. For India, these corridors are vital not only for regional cooperation but also for achieving the Vision 2047 goal of becoming a developed and globally connected nation. Both land and maritime corridors will play a pivotal role in ensuring that India remains a diversified, reliable, and strategic partner in global supply chains.

- **Linking IMEC with EMC through Southern Indian Ports:** The southern ports of India play a crucial role in linking IMEC with EMC, thereby creating a seamless east–west connectivity network. The EMC holds immense potential for enhancing port capacity along the eastern coastal part of India and establishing vital connections not only for trade but also for energy cooperation, including prospects for integrating Arctic channels into future trade routes. The IMEC extends beyond cargo and pipeline connectivity into the broader domain of energy integration and transition.

- **Harnessing Renewable Energy Potential through Regional Investment and Collaboration:** Countries with substantial untapped renewable energy potential must leverage it via greater regional investment and collaboration. The evolving dynamics of the corridors IMEC and EMC can reshape growth trajectories, positioning participating nations as key players in the emerging global connectivity and energy landscape.

- **Building a Strong National Fleet and Promoting India-Flagged Vessels:** It is essential for the Government of India to promote India-flagged vessels, attract investments, and encourage

shipbuilding and fleet diversification across different sizes and capacities to boost sea connectivity and cargo management efficiency. Currently, in India, it is cheaper to import shipping services than to run its own. However, this dependence leads to capital outflow and missed opportunities for growth within India's maritime sector. Without a robust presence of India-flagged ships, the country risks the loss of growth potential, capital flight, and reduced control over its own cargo movement. There must be a significant increase in investments in both connectivity infrastructure and India-flagged vessels to ensure sustainable maritime growth and global competitiveness.

There is also a pressing need for India to secure long-term cargo management contracts to ensure stability, predictability, and economic viability in maritime operations. Strengthening India's shipping and port infrastructure will help minimise multiple cargo handling stages, thereby reducing costs and improving turnaround efficiency. India aims to play a more facilitative and neutral role in the geopolitical landscape by efficiently facilitating cargo movement and enhancing maritime logistics.

- **Advancing the Blue Economy, Green Shipping, and Coastal State Capacity:** Key national enablers of international corridors include the blue economy, India's connectivity readiness, and the advancement of green shipping initiatives. Enhancing awareness through coastal state workshops to promote welfare measures and collaboration in areas such as ship recycling, shipbuilding, and ship repair is recommended. Coordinated efforts with state maritime boards will prove instrumental in strengthening India's maritime sector, enabling the country to effectively leverage the opportunities offered by these transnational initiatives.

# ANNEXURE

## Background

The world is in churn amid tariff wars, economic sanctions and continuing conflicts across the globe. Countries are closing in with protectionist measures and policies aimed at "Making Country Great Again' slogans. The established world order is collapsing (if not effectively collapsed). The UN is unable to stop conflicts, has no say in militarily superior nations launching assaults into sovereign territories of other nations, often at flimsy pretexts and its desperate calls against genocides are left unattended. WTO, similarly has lost its teeth, is unable to resolve trade disputes and is left to watch as a bystander as countries impose tariffs on other countries, often at the whims of their leaders.

Amid this prevailing global scenario of gloom and despair, connectivity is emerging as the new buzzword and international connectivity corridors promise to provide the right solutions, having the potential to unlock the untapped economic potential by integrating the countries and regions together through corridors and trade linkages.

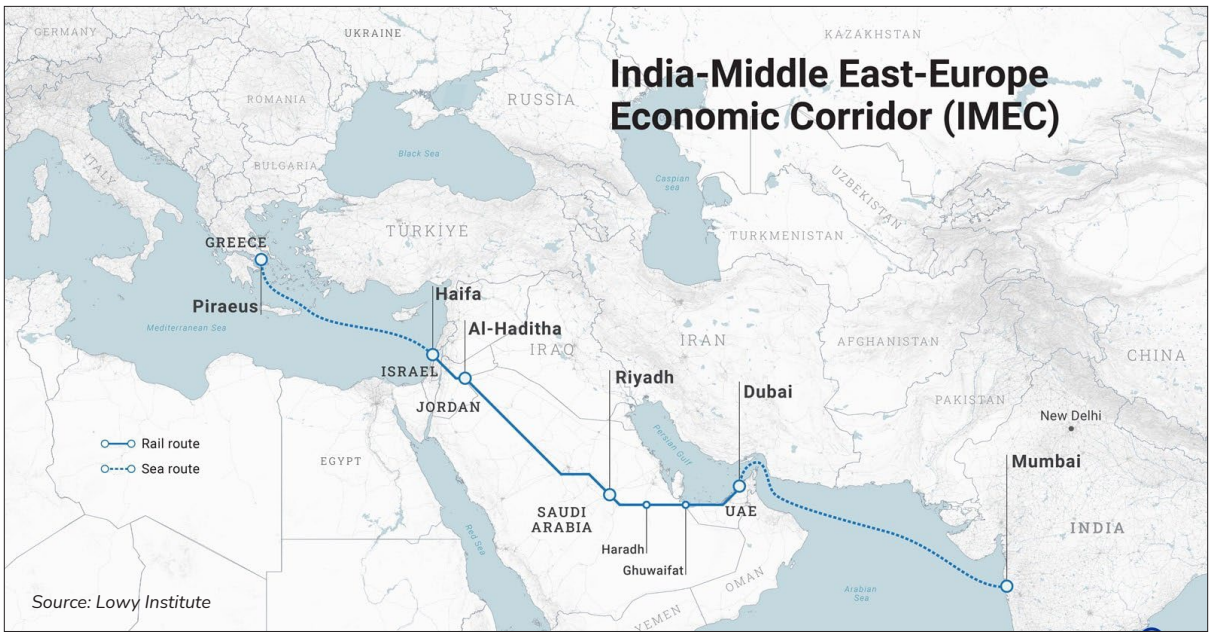
International corridors – whether economic, digital, or green – are fast emerging as the backbone of global trade, connectivity, and sustainable growth. India's strategic location makes it a natural connector between Asia, West Asia, Africa, Europe and the Far East. At the same time, connectivity projects such as the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), EU Global Gateway, G7 Partnership for Global Infrastructure (PGII), and Eastern Maritime Corridor (EMC) underline the importance of building inclusive and transparent connectivity frameworks.

Among these corridors, the IMEC and EMC are extremely important not only for India because it anchors both these, but for the entire globe which is seeking solutions to diversify trade and seek newer and safer opportunities with new and reliable partners.

### India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor

Pitched as a bold and transformative connectivity project, the IMEC was launched at the G20 Summit in New Delhi on 9th September 2023. In its concept, it is a bold vision to connect India with Europe across the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula. It envisions a multi-modal economic corridor involving multiple businesses, integrating railways, ports, highways, energy networks, and digital infrastructure to enhance trade, investment, and connectivity across the continents.

The proposed structure of the IMEC has three distinct sections. The eastern section links India with West Asia via sea links connecting key ports in India to the UAE. This section has provision for a sea link as well as an under-sea pipeline for data and energy transfer. The central section is the overland rail route across the West Asian region, traversing the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan and culminating at the port of Haifa in Israel. The western leg of the corridor is sea-bound wherein the containers have to be put back on ships at Haifa, to be transported to various ports in Europe. The current alignment envisages the use of ports of Mundra, Kandla and Mumbai in India. ports of Fujairah and Jebel Ali in




the UAE, followed by the port of Haifa in Israel, and along with ports Marseille in France, Trieste in Italy and Piraeus in Greece.

The project's success involves developing modern and well-integrated ports, seamless and well synchronised regulatory framework and a compatible and efficient railway network. Plus, the under-sea pipeline is a crucial element of IMEC as it envisages installation of infrastructure for electricity and digital connectivity, as well as pipelines for clean hydrogen export. When implemented in full, it promises to unlock new opportunities of multi-dimensional trade through multi-modal transport linkages across regions that have traditionally been close trade partners. It has the potential to facilitate faster and more efficient movement of goods, bypassing existing bottlenecks, reducing shipping delays, lowering greenhouse gas emissions, and cutting costs.

However, even before this path breaking project could be take off, the war in Gaza broke out on 7th October 2023, resulting in the project getting stalled. Two years on, the Gaza war has amply proven that the IMEC in its current form has serious missing links. During the course of this war, Houthis in Yemen have often blocked access to the Red Sea and the critical Port of Haifa is inaccessible. There is therefore a need to rethink the original structure of IMEC and add links that make IMEC less conflict prone and while enhancing its resilience and long-term viability.

## The Significance of IMEC

Geopolitically, IMEC has been pitched as an expression of India's rise as a global power, both politically and economically, almost coinciding with it becoming the 4th largest global economy. For India, IMEC represents a strategic vision well beyond the physical infrastructure in its quest for building a more connected, resilient, and inclusive global order. It also pitches it as a hub linking its 'Act East' and 'Link West' policies, enhancing economic and geopolitical integration.

Additionally, IMEC helps India in achieving its targets towards energy transition too. Having set a target of becoming energy independent by 2047 and achieving net zero emission by 2070, India's increasing use

of renewable energy across all economic spheres is central to India's Energy Transition. Green Hydrogen is considered a promising alternative for enabling this transition. IMEC provides an opportunity for India to not only promote hydrogen as an alternative fuel and an effective long-term alternative to fossil fuels but also export the fuel by incorporating clean hydrogen pipelines into the corridor.

IMEC is also seen as a geopolitical tool to bring Israel closer to the West Asian region. The inclusion of Haifa Port in Israel and the US being a part of the project without having any direct linkages or benefits, clearly points in this direction. In terms of trade between the EU and India, the IMEC is being seen as an economic game changer and an opportunity to strengthen strategic partnerships. The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, during her visit with a delegation of EU Commissioners to India in February 2025, had pitched for the IMEC as an important cornerstone for enhancing India-EU trade.

Despite being stalled for over two years due to the Gaza conflict, there is a positive momentum towards IMEC in the past few months. Italy and France have nominated special envoys for the project while India and the UAE have commenced work bilaterally on coordinating the digital regulatory framework. The launch of the India-UAE Virtual Trade Corridor and Master Application for International Trade and Regulatory Interface (MAITRI) is one such significant development. It aims to integrate Indian trade portals with the UAE counterparts to enable seamless, paperless, and efficient trade by streamlining regulatory processes and reducing transshipment and logistics costs.

The first meeting of IMEC envoys and Sherpas was held on 5-6 August 2025, hosted by India wherein a clear sense emerged that IMEC cannot wait for the conflict in West Asia to get over and a work-around needs to be worked out. Inclusion of Egypt and Oman within the alignment too is gaining traction as IMEC is being seen more as a networked alignment instead of a point-to-point corridor. Aspects of coordination within partner countries, pooling in of financial resources and most importantly, making IMEC attractive and viable enough for the private sector to invest capital is being discussed. A possible meeting of Foreign Ministers is likely to take place in November 2025, before a possible IMEC Summit later.

With the right mix of infrastructure, investment, seamless regulatory framework, diplomatic engagement, and institutional coordination, IMEC can become a cornerstone of 21st-century connectivity, creating new avenues for shared prosperity. For India, IMEC offers the perfect opportunity to explore new economic partnerships and take all necessary steps to secure its national interests. For other countries signatories to the project as well as those who are looking to join in, there is a definite recognition of the advantages of making this project a success soon.

### Eastern Maritime Corridor

The Eastern Maritime Corridor (EMC) – also referred to as the Chennai-Vladivostok Maritime Corridor – is a direct sea route linking connects Chennai on India's east coast with Vladivostok in Russia's Far East, traversing the South China Sea, the Malacca Strait, and the Sea of Japan. India and Russia first formalized intent to develop this link through a Memorandum of Intent signed in Vladivostok in September 2019, aiming to create a faster, more reliable connection between the Indian Ocean and Russia's Far East.


The route spans about 5,600 nautical miles and entails an estimated transit time of roughly 24 days, a saving of up to ~16 days compared with routing cargo via Europe and the Suez Canal, which typically takes 35-40+ days. The EMC is expected to foster the diversification of India-Russia trade beyond hydrocarbons to include coal, LNG, fertilizers, metals, and other commodities. Strategically, the EMC complements the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) by offering a direct Indo-Russian maritime axis while INSTC provides a multimodal link via Iran and the Caspian. For India, the EMC enhances access to the resource-rich Russian Far East (e.g., coking coal), and for Russia it deepens its "pivot to Asia." In late 2024 that the Chennai-Vladivostok Sea route became operational, with shipments reported on the corridor and an expected cut in transit times. This follows sustained engagement at the Eastern Economic Forum (2023) and related working-level coordination.

### The Significance of EMC

The EMC has very low requirements to develop supporting infrastructure as it is a dedicated sea route only. Goods once loaded get offloaded at the destination only. It thus obviates the trans-shipment requirement and saves the traders from complicated documentation and regulatory requirements. The EMC offers India a means to solidify its influence in the Indo-Pacific region, a crucial area that is of great interest to both Western powers and China. In addition to Russia, the EMC, if leveraged properly, can result in increased maritime trade with Southeast Asian countries. With Eastern Russia rich in minerals, the EMC offers India direct access to Russia's vast natural resources, including hydrocarbons, coal, and rare earth minerals. In addition, EMC enhances India's economic footprint in a region that is a focal point for both Russian and Chinese interests. While currently limited in volume, EMC holds strong potential for resource-driven trade and could become a strategic lever for India's energy security and Indo-Pacific outreach. EMC also complements the INSTC by providing maritime access to Russia's eastern frontiers, while INSTC handles the western land connection.

## The Structuring of the Event

The India Maritime Week, October 2025, hosted by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Government of India provides the perfect platform to discuss economic corridors and transnational connectivity options. Within this, Chintan Research Foundation (CRF) will organize a half day dialogue focussing exclusively on connectivity corridors, their concept, need and future viability. Discussions will focus on corridors that reflects global perspectives, not only national ones, while prioritizing practical outcomes such as partnerships, investment opportunities, and regulatory cooperation. The event will also ensure balancing voices from developed and developing economies, ensuring collective ownership of growth. A dialogue like this is not truly global if it does not carry along the Global South, if it does not balance perspectives of large economies with those of smaller nations, or if it overlooks the voices of private enterprise and civil society. The sessions are therefore anchored in partnerships, investment opportunities, and the search for common standards. Whether in logistics interoperability, digital trade facilitation, or green shipping technologies, the panels will highlight specific areas where collaboration is not only possible but immediately actionable. In convening experts from multilateral organisations, from developed and developing partners, and from the private sector alongside government, it will be ensured that the diversity of voice translates into depth of outcome.

## Objectives of the Event

This conference event aims to position India as a natural leader and convenor of inclusive, future oriented conversations on connectivity corridors, where solutions are grounded in cooperative action across geographies and sectors. Such corridors are seen not only as trade routes, but as comprehensive frameworks of connectivity driving economic dynamism, digital integration, and climate aligned growth.

The objectives can be broadly classified into following categories:

1. Global Framing: Situate international corridors in a worldwide context, aligning India's efforts with evolving global connectivity initiatives.
2. Practical Outcomes: Highlight areas for partnerships (public–private, international regional), explore investment opportunities, and discuss regulatory and policy convergence.
3. Inclusivity: Create a dialogue space that brings together perspectives from both developed and developing economies, underscoring shared prosperity.
4. Future-Readiness: Explore how corridors can integrate economic, digital, and green dimensions to build resilient and sustainable pathways for growth.

## Event Schedule

| Start time (IST) | End time (IST) | Detailed Description of Activity | Speakers |
|---|---|---|---|
| 10:00 | 10:45 | **Inaugural Session** | 1. **Sh. Shantanu Thakur,** Minister of State, PSW<br>2. **Mr. Edoardo Rixi,** Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Transport, Italy<br>3. **Moderator – Mr. Shishir Priyadarshi,** President, CRF |
| 10:45 | 12:15 | **Session 1**<br><br>**Transnational Connectivity – The New Currency of Geopolitical Convergence and Geo-economic Alignment** | 1. **Moderator – Vice-Admiral (Retd.) Biswajit Dasgupta,** National Maritime Security Coordinator, NSCS.<br>2. **H.E. Amb. Lazar Comanescu,** Secretary-General, Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization<br>3. **Mr. Algis Latakas**, DG - Port of Klaipėda, Lithuania<br>4. **Mr. Sanjay Swarup**, Chairman and Managing Director, Container Corporation of India (CONCOR), New Delhi<br>5. **Mr. Deepak Shetty**, Former Secretary to the GoI & Director General of Shipping, Ministry of Shipping<br>6. **Mr. Pranav Choudhary**, CEO, Adani Ports and SEZ (APSEZ), Gujarat |
| 12:15 | 12:30 | **Tea Break** | |
| 12:30 | 14:00 | **Session 2**<br><br>**IMEC and EMC – The Future of Global Connectivity** | 1. **Moderator – Mr. Deepak Shetty**, Former Secretary to the GoI & Director General of 0Shipping, Ministry of Shipping<br>2. **Mr. Shyam Jagannathan**, IAS, Director Generalof Shipping & Additional Secretary to the GoI, Mumbai<br>3. **Mr. Romesh David**, CEO, South Asia Gateway Terminals<br>4. **Mr. S. Ramakrishnan,** Executive Chairman, Transworld Group of Companies (Shipping & Logistics), Dubai<br>5. **Mr. Anil Devli,** CEO, INSA (Indian National Shipowners Association), Mumbai<br>6. **Mr. Sunil Vaswani**, Executive Director, CSLA (Container Shipping Lines Association), Mumbai |

Organisers: Col Rajeev Agarwal, Dr Cchavi Vasisht, Nishit Patil, Avni Goel, Lakshmi Kusuma Kotha

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