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Coast Guard Reforms 2026: Gender-Neutral Induction and a "Presumed Dead" Ex-Gratia Framework

28 July 2026 ·

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Coast Guard Reforms 2026: Gender-Neutral Induction and a "Presumed Dead" Ex-Gratia Framework

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✓ Every fact web-verified against primary sources

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh unveiled two policy reforms for the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) at Kartavya Bhavan-2, New Delhi, on July 28, 2026, in the presence of Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh and Director General Paramesh Sivamani: gender-neutral officer induction, and a streamlined “presumed dead” ex-gratia mechanism for personnel missing at sea.

THE TWO REFORMS

REFORM	WHAT IT DOES
Gender-neutral induction	Women candidates to be inducted into both the Short Service Appointment (SSA) and Permanent Appointment (PA) officer cadres on the same terms as men, covering both recruitment and career progression
Ex-gratia streamlining	The competent authority is empowered to declare an ICG member reported missing at sea while on duty as “ presumed dead ”, for the specific purpose of releasing ex-gratia compensation and terminal benefits to the next of kin without waiting for prolonged confirmation processes

The ex-gratia reform targets a specific administrative bottleneck: in a maritime force, a person lost at sea may never be recovered, and the absence of a formal death confirmation has historically delayed compensation to families for extended periods even where operational loss is not in doubt. A “presumed dead” declaration mechanism converts an evidentiary gap into an administrative decision point, so that financial support reaches the family without an open-ended wait.

ABOUT THE INDIAN COAST GUARD

PARAMETER	DETAIL
Raised	1 February 1977 ; given statutory form by the Coast Guard Act, 1978
Nature	An armed force of the Union, distinct from the Navy, under the Ministry of Defence
50th Raising Day (Golden Jubilee)	Marked 1 February 2026 , months before these reforms
Core mandate	Maritime law enforcement in India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), search and rescue, marine environment protection, anti-smuggling and coastal security
Motto	<i>Vayam Rakshamah</i> , "We Protect"

The ICG's coastal-security mandate expanded significantly after the **26/11 Mumbai attacks (2008)**, which exposed gaps in coastal surveillance; the Force has since been central to India's layered coastal-security architecture, working with State marine police and the Navy.

GENDER-INCLUSIVE REFORM ACROSS THE ARMED FORCES: CONTEXT

The ICG reform continues a broader [trajectory](#) across India's uniformed forces:

MILESTONE	YEAR
Women granted Permanent Commission in select Army/Navy/Air Force non-combat streams	Progressive expansion through the 2010s
Supreme Court judgment directing Permanent Commission for women officers in the Army (Secretary, Ministry of Defence vs Babita Puniya)	2020
Women pilots inducted into fighter squadrons (Indian Air Force)	From 2016
ICG gender-neutral SSA and PA induction	2026

The 2020 Supreme Court judgment is the [doctrinal](#) anchor for this line of reform: it held that denying women Permanent Commission on the ground of "physiological limitations" or "inherent difficulties" was based on sex stereotypes rather than a genuine operational necessity, and directed the government to grant Permanent Commission to eligible women officers.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 3: Various security forces and agencies and their mandate; coastal security and maritime law enforcement.

GS Paper 2: Government policies and interventions for gender parity in public employment; issues relating to women's empowerment.

Prelims pointers:

- The Indian Coast Guard was raised on **1 February 1977** and given statutory form by the **Coast Guard Act, 1978**; it marked its **50th Raising Day (Golden Jubilee) on 1 February 2026**.
- ICG Director General (as of July 2026): **Paramesh Sivamani**.
- The 2026 reforms cover **SSA and PA cadre gender-neutral induction**, and a “**presumed dead**” **ex-gratia mechanism**.
- The ICG's motto is *Vayam Rakshamah*.
- The landmark case on women's Permanent Commission in the Army is **Secretary, Ministry of Defence vs Babita Puniya (2020)**.

★ FACTS CORNER, KNOWLEDGE PEDIA

COAST GUARD REFORMS, 2026:

Announced by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, July 28, 2026, Kartavya Bhavan-2, New Delhi.

Present: Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, DG ICG Paramesh Sivamani.

Reform 1: gender-neutral induction into SSA and PA officer cadres.

Reform 2: “presumed dead” declaration mechanism for faster ex-gratia and terminal benefits to families of personnel missing at sea.

INDIAN COAST GUARD:

Raised 1 February 1977; Coast Guard Act, 1978 gave it statutory form.

50th Raising Day (Golden Jubilee): marked 1 February 2026.

Motto: Vayam Rakshamah, “We Protect”.

Mandate: EEZ law enforcement, search and rescue, marine environment protection, anti-smuggling, coastal security.

GENDER-INCLUSIVE REFORM TIMELINE:

Secretary, Ministry of Defence vs Babita Puniya (2020): Supreme Court directs Permanent Commission for eligible women Army officers.

Indian Air Force inducted women fighter pilots from 2016.

ICG gender-neutral SSA/PA induction: 2026.

Sources: Ministry of Defence, PIB, Indian Coast Guard, ANI

Source: Coast Guard Reforms 2026: Gender-Neutral Induction and a "Presumed Dead" Ex-Gratia Framework —
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