

Atmanirbharta in shipping a key goal of maritime policy: Sonowal



DHRUVAKSH SAHA

New Delhi, 18 June

India is actively moving towards establishing *atmanirbharta* (self-reliance) in shipping and has pushed for multiple joint ventures between Indian and major global private sector shipyards, Shipping Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said.

In an interview with *Business Standard*, the minister said the government is looking at Europe for new innovations in shipping and ship

manufacturing and looking at major shipyards in Asia to set up yards in India.

The minister was, earlier this month, on a five-day visit to Japan, Norway, and Denmark to bolster global collaboration and global investment in India's maritime sector.

"During the visit, India and India's private sector maritime players explored the scope of collaborations on further strengthening the shipbuilding ecosystem, and building partnerships to manufacture maritime equipment and

machineries in India with an attempt to boost Make in India. India's strong capabilities in shipbuilding must be sustained with cleaner and greener technologies towards which multiple MoUs were signed to transfer knowledge that empowers us to elevate our position in this regard," Sonowal said.

Earlier this year, after a slew of budget reforms, Gujarat's Deendayal Port had issued a tender to establish a shipbuilding cluster in Kandla, aimed at foreign major players who had expressed interest in investing in India. However, the tender evinced minimal interest, with only one bidder.

"The Indian shipbuilding industry will need to develop its

capabilities in terms of modern shipbuilding technologies and processes. This can be achieved through collaboration with foreign shipbuilders, and the same is being pursued by both private sector as well as PSU shipyards," the minister said.

The recent deliberations, according to the minister, became opportunities to reinforce India's business-friendliness for the highly capital-intensive sector.

On the question of whether evolving geopolitical dynamics have any impact on India's ambitions, Sonowal said, "The global geopolitical situation is a constantly evolving one, and amidst this flux, our unwavering focus is to safeguard the future of India's

maritime industry, reduce dependency and ensure *atmanirbharta* in shipping. We are committed to ensuring it remains growth-focused, strong and seamlessly integrated into the global maritime ecosystem, aligned with our national priorities and at the same time tapping available international opportunities." On talks with Norway, the minister said he engaged with industry leaders and explored a range of bilateral opportunities, including the potential for increased employment of Indian seafarers in the Norwegian fleet. Around 10 per cent of Norwegian ships are being built in India.

The minister had also met Terada Yoshimichi, Japan's vice-minister for International

Affairs, and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport & Tourism. He said that a plan to develop India's islands into smart islands was on the cards in the bilateral deliberations.

"We explored expanding ties between Indian and Japanese shipyards, including Greenfield investments like Imabari Shipbuilding in Andhra Pradesh. Opportunities for co-developing ports and maritime clusters as clean energy hubs were also identified. I conveyed India's interest in joint ventures with top Japanese shipbuilders—Imabari, JMUC, Kanagawa Dockyard, and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, and invited NYK Line, MOL, and K Line to invest in next-gen, sustainable maritime technologies," he said.

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Sarbananda Sonowal, Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways