

ShipMin eyes salt lands for port infra expansion

Last year, DPIIT had sought unused salt lands from Centre and states

DHRUVAKSH SAHA
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The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (ShipMin) has sought access to large parcels of salt lands along the coasts of India for infrastructure expansion in major ports and allied logistics facilities, according to sources aware of the developments.

Last year, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) had asked central government ministries and state governments to seek unused and unproductive salt lands.

“With the massive scope of the port expansion programme that the government is conducting, land availability was a cause of concern during initial stages. Some prominent major ports are close to reaching saturation in terms of land availability, so expansion within the same piece of land is difficult as allied industries have already been set up for years, driving land acquisition costs further up and complicating the process,” a senior official said.

The shipping ministry has studied DPIIT’s proposal for transfer of salt lands and made proposals for land totalling 40,000 acres across several coastal states, including large pieces in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, among others. “The land parcels have already started coming in pieces, starting from Odisha, and more will be getting allocated to the ministry in the coming time,” a second official said.

Queries emailed to the spokesperson for the shipping ministry did not elicit any response till print time.

DPIIT issued guidelines for the transfer of approximately 60,000 acres of unused and unproductive salt lands for productive and public purposes. These lands will be transferred on easy terms to central government ministries, state governments, and public sector enterprises for various national development projects. “This includes land transfers for biodiversity conservation, eco-sensitive projects,



renewable energy, and affordable housing, among others,” the Ministry of Commerce had said in a statement in October 2024.

The government will look at these unused and unproductive salt lands to establish facilities like multi-modal logistics terminals and storage and transportation facilities under the aegis of major ports.

Land parcels totalling over 5,000 acres in Maharashtra have been a subject of hot pursuit by commercial players in and around Mumbai, but these parcels were earlier not available. According to current guidelines, private players can acquire salt lands through online auctions if the central government, CPSEs, and state governments are not willing to take up the land at applicable rates.

According to sources, the shipping ministry has also made a proposal for the Maharashtra land parcels. The ministry has a larger plan to increase port capacity at major ports to over 2,000 million metric tonnes (MMT) by 2030, requiring close to

INFRA BOOST

- ShipMin has sought salt lands across various coastal states, including commercially-sought after large parcels in Maharashtra and Odisha
- The plan is part of the port expansion programme of the government to increase port capacity to 2000 mmt by 2030
- In 2024, DPIIT through the Salt Commissioner’s Organisation had asked stakeholders to seek unused and unproductive salt lands at concessional rates
- DPIIT has over 60,000 acres of salt land to be transferred to central ministries, CPSEs, state governments, and private players

a 30 per cent expansion in the next four-five years, which would require significant expansion in storage and commercial areas as well.

The Salt Commissioner’s Office (SCO), headquartered in Jaipur, is under the administrative control of the DPIIT. According to an SCO notice in August 2024, these land parcels will be transferred on a free-hold basis to central government ministries and departments for a token value of Re 1. These rates will vary for state governments and other parties, depending on the nature of work to be undertaken on them. Ecologically fragile land will be transferred to state governments free of cost.

“This initiative not only unlocks valuable land resources but also prevents encroachment and litigation, ensuring that these lands are utilised for the nation’s industrial and infrastructural development. Projects like port expansions, eco-tourism, and aquaculture are expected to benefit from these new guidelines,” the DPIIT said in October.