

INDIAN NAVY TO INDUCT TRADITIONALLY BUILT 'ANCIENT STITCHED SHIP'

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Indian Navy will induct and unveil the name of the Ancient Stitched Ship during a ceremonial event on **21 May 2025 at Naval Base, Karwar**. **The Hon'ble Minister of Culture, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**, will preside over the ceremony as the Chief Guest, formally marking the induction of the ship into Indian Navy.

The stitched ship is a recreation of a 5th century CE ship, inspired by a painting from the Ajanta Caves. The project was formally initiated through a tripartite agreement signed in Jul 2023 between **the Ministry of Culture, the Indian Navy, and M/s Hodi Innovations**, with funding from the Ministry of Culture. The Keel laying of the Stitched Ship took place on 12 Sep 23 (<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1956754>).

The construction of the Stitched Ship was carried out using entirely traditional methods, and raw materials by artisans from Kerala, led by **master shipwright Shri Babu Sankaran**, who executed thousands of hand-stitched joints. The ship was launched in Feb 2025 at M/s Hodi Shipyard, Goa (<https://x.com/indiannavy/status/1895045968988643743>).

The Indian Navy has overseen the entire spectrum of implementation of this project, including concept development, design, technical validation and construction in collaboration with M/s Hodi Innovations and traditional artisans. The design and construction posed unique technical challenges. With no surviving blueprints or physical remnants, the design had to be extrapolated from a two-dimensional artistic iconography. The project demanded a unique interdisciplinary approach, combining archaeological interpretation, Naval architecture, hydrodynamic testing and traditional craftsmanship. Unlike any modern vessel, the stitched ship is equipped with square sails and steering oars, which are entirely alien to modern-day ships. The hull geometry, rigging and sails had to be reimaged and tested from first principles. The Indian Navy collaborated with the Department of Ocean Engineering, IIT Madras, to conduct model testing to validate the vessel's hydrodynamic behaviour at sea. Further, the Indian Navy undertook an in-house structural analysis to assess the wooden mast system, designed and constructed without the use of contemporary materials.

Every aspect of the ship had to balance historical authenticity with seaworthiness, leading to design choices that were both innovative and true to the maritime traditions of ancient India. The combination of a stitched hull, square sails, wooden spars, and traditional steering mechanisms makes the vessel unlike any ship currently in Naval service anywhere in the world. The successful completion of the construction of the Ancient Stitched Ship represents the completion of the first and most formidable phase, bringing to life, from an artistic depiction, a fully functional sea-going vessel.

Post induction, the project will enter its second important phase, where the Indian Navy will undertake the ambitious challenge of sailing this vessel along traditional maritime trade routes, reviving the spirit of ancient Indian seafaring. **Preparations for the vessel's maiden transoceanic voyage from Gujarat to Oman are already underway.**

The completion of the stitched ship construction not only reaffirms India's rich shipbuilding legacy but also reflects the Indian Navy's commitment to preserving and operationalising the living traditions of India's Maritime Heritage.





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